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Zig-Zag, the Clown;

OR,

THE STEEL GAUNTLETS.

BY FORTUNÉ DU BOISGOBEY.

17 TO 27 VANDEWATER ST
NEW YORK
George Munro
PUBLISHER

The Seaside Library, Pocket Edition, Issued Tri-weekly. By subscription $36 per annum.

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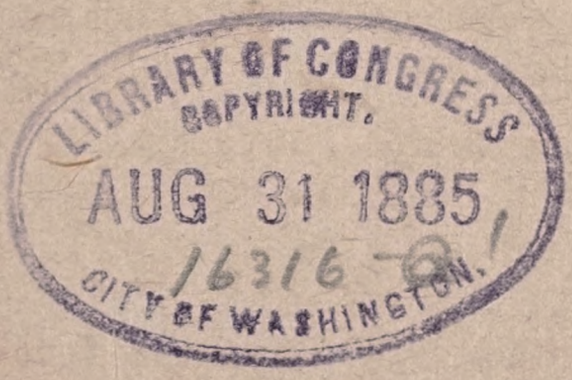
OR,

THE STEEL GAUNTLETS.

FROM THE FRENCH OF

F. DU BOISGOBEY.



NEW YORK:
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ZIG-ZAG, THE CLOWN.

CHAPTER I.

THE night is dark, and the rain, which is falling in torrents, dashes fiercely against the windows of an isolated cottage at the end of the Boulevard Voltaire and very near the Place du Trône.

A cottage, not a villa, for it consists of but one story and an attic—no court-yard, no terrace, nothing save a board fence on the side next the street, and behind this primitive inclosure an unkempt patch of grass bounded on two sides by vegetable gardens.

The architect had not even taken the trouble to provide a foundation, but had placed the structure flat on the ground, as if it had been brought there already built.

It is occupied, however, for there is a light in one of the windows of the lower story.

Who can live there? No capitalist, certainly, for his money would not be safe there. A shopkeeper? No customer would come so far to patronize him. This uninviting abode would best suit some old misanthrope, who could hide himself there like an owl in his tower, or possibly some impoverished family of the middle class that is reduced by stern necessity to raising the vegetables for their tiny dinner-pot.

At least, such was the opinion of the passers-by who saw this structure standing like a huge bowlder in the middle of the field, and so, too, thought the neighbors, who scarcely knew the inmates of the shabby dwelling by sight.

They were all greatly mistaken, however, and it would only have been necessary for them to cross the threshold of the cottage to see that appearances were, indeed, de-

ceitful in this case, and that the dwelling was comfortably, if not luxuriously, furnished.

The lighted window was that of a little drawing-room, which contained a number of handsome arm-chairs of different sizes, to say nothing of a low Turkish divan, bright with gay-colored cushions.

A good fire blazed in the grate, though it was April, and the mantel bore, instead of the gilt clock affected by retired grocers, a bronze statuette bearing the name of a well-known artist.

The floor was covered with a Smyrna carpet, and portières of écru silk concealed the doors.

In the middle of the room stood a large square table that did not harmonize very well with the rest of the furniture—a real work-table strewn with large sheets of drawing-paper, rulers, pencils and compasses.

And it was evidently there for use, not for ornament, for a man sat perched on a stool at one side of it, bending over a model which he was carefully copying.

Opposite him sat a young lady embroidering by the soft light of a shaded lamp.

The man was at least fifty years of age, with thick, dark hair streaked with silver, a long gray beard, and large, brilliant black eyes that lit up a rather careworn face.

The young lady was beautiful, though her thoughtful and somewhat virile beauty was of a type that made her look older than she really was to a casual observer; but her twenty years were unmistakably imprinted on her face, which was as fresh as a spring flower, and upon her form, characterized by the supple roundness of early womanhood.

She worked on steadily, without lifting her eyes from her work, and the silence was broken only by the mutterings of the storm which was raging without.

"What weather!" she murmured at last, dropping her work into her lap. "I should be afraid if I were alone. Do you notice how the house shakes? I really fear that it will tumble down about our ears."

"It will last a month longer, I guess," replied the man, laughing, "and in less than a month my dear Camille will be living in a handsome suite of rooms in a fashionable part of the city; for, now I have secured the means of introducing my patent, our fortune is made."

"So you tell me, father; but I have not yet succeeded in accustoming myself to the idea that we are going to be rich."

"We are rich already, for I received this morning a first installment of twenty thousand francs; and that is a mere trifle in comparison with the entire amount my invention will yield. You know that the entire number of steam engines in the world is almost beyond computation, and in a little while they will all be paying tribute to me, for not one of them can do without the Monistrol condenser. And only to think that I had been working for twenty years without any practical results whatever, when I met this worthy Gémozac, who opened his purse to give me the means of making a practical application of my theory. I am no longer troubled by any fears of failure now. But let me finish this drawing, which I must show to my partner to-morrow morning. It is ten o'clock already, and when I have finished this work, I shall still have to find a hiding-place for the crisp thousand-franc notes I received to-day. I am so little in the habit of having money that I don't know where to put it. We have no strong box here."

"Have you the money about you?" inquired Camille.

"Yes, here it is," said Monistrol, drawing the money from his breast-pocket and laying it on the table.

"You had better lock it up in my wardrobe for the night; but deposit it in some banking-house to-morrow, I beg of you. I shall not know an easy moment while the money is in our possession. This house is at the mercy of the first thief that happens along; and if an attempt should be made to murder us, no one would hear our cries for help, for the Boulevard Voltaire is deserted at night."

"Not this evening, at least, my dear, for the gingerbread fair is in progress on the Place du Trône, and it draws a crowd even in this beastly weather. Listen, you can hear the music now."

And in fact the wind did bring to their ears broken snatches of music from the brass band that was playing noisily in front of the circus tent.

"Besides, before going up to my room, I shall barricade the outside door," continued Monistrol. "Now go on

with your embroidery, my child, while I finish my work. It will not take me long."

The father and daughter resumed their occupations; the father eagerly, the daughter half reluctantly.

Camille's fingers moved the needle in and out, it is true, but her attention was no longer on her work.

She was thinking of the brilliant future that was opening before her, and of the peaceful, quiet life she was about to leave; and she already began to think with regret of the modest existence in which she had been so happy, for the cares and responsibilities that accompany wealth frightened her.

Camille had no ambition, and she was extremely nervous, so she found herself in much the same state of mind as a man who is about to embark for an unknown country, but who would much prefer to remain in his native village. Her overexcited imagination showed her only the dangers of the voyage, and she had a vague presentiment of approaching misfortune.

A light sound, an almost imperceptible cracking, made her start.

One would have thought some person was moving cautiously about in the adjoining dining-room, which was separated from the little parlor only by a double portière.

She was afraid to disturb her father, who was absorbed in his work, and who had heard nothing; but, raising her head, she looked and listened attentively.

At first, she perceived nothing unusual, but as the sound ceased, and she was about to resume her work, she thought she saw a hand glide between the two curtains that draped the doorway.

Was it really a hand, that dark spot that had so suddenly appeared upon the white curtain? Camille doubted it at first, though she was at a loss to explain this strange discovery. She even thought that she must be the victim of an optical illusion. The fire had burned itself to ashes, and in the dim light of the shaded lamp it was difficult to clearly distinguish objects at the further end of the room.

She tried to close her eyes, but could not, so irresistible was the fascination that mysterious spot exercised over her.

Monistrol, who was sitting with his back to the door, worked away at his drawing with unflagging zeal.

By dint of persistent scrutiny, Camille finally succeeded in distinguishing the fingers of the hand that had parted the curtain—fingers as knotty and crooked as the claws of a crab, while the thumb, which was widely separated from the fingers, was of extraordinary length, and ended in a long, hooked nail, like the talon of a vulture.

Just then, in the slight opening between the curtains, Camille saw something she took for the blade of a dagger glitter in the darkness.

"Look, father!" she shrieked wildly, pointing to the door.

On hearing this unexpected call, Monistrol hastily turned, but he had not time to rise.

With a single bound—the bound of a panther—the man who had been hiding in the dining-room sprung upon him. One hand—the same gigantic hand Camille had seen—seized the roll of bank-notes; the other clutched by the throat the unfortunate inventor, who overturned the lamp in his struggles to rise.

Camille sprung forward to defend her father, but the thief repulsed her with a vigorous kick that sent her reeling to the floor.

She did not lose courage, however, but sprung to her feet almost instantly. By this time the room was enshrouded in darkness, and she could hear the sound of scuffling and of labored breathing, but could see nothing.

She finally succeeded in groping her way back to the table, but found it would be necessary to get on the other side of it to seize the wretch who was holding Monistrol down. She succeeded in this, and then tried to seize the thief by the coat; but it was of some smooth, slippery fabric, upon which she was utterly unable to secure a hold, though, strange to say, her fingers occasionally came in contact with small but sharp excrescences that cut and tore her hands terribly.

The thief made no attempt to hurt her, however, his object being, evidently, to overcome Monistrol's resistance, and make his escape with the money.

The struggle did not last long. Monistrol soon relaxed his hold with a groan, and flinging him heavily to the floor, the thief hastily fled.

His work was accomplished. He had secured the twenty thousand francs, and he thought only of making his es-

cape without paying any further attention to the young girl whom he supposed incapable of pursuing him.

He was mistaken, however. Camille supposed that her father was only stunned, for a strong man seldom dies of a fall, and the thief had used no weapons.

"Follow me, father!" she cried. "He shall not escape us."

And she rushed after the scoundrel, who had already reached the hall.

He fled through the outside door, which he had left open on his entrance, ran rapidly across the plat of grass that lay between the house and the fence, cleared this last at a bound, and flew up in the Boulevard Voltaire in the direction of the Place du Trône.

This was exactly what Camille wished, for she said to herself that she should certainly find policemen to arrest the audacious rascal on the square where this fair was in progress.

The great thing now was not to allow him to distance her. M. Monistrol, instead of rearing her like a fine lady, had early taught her to help herself, so she had good strong muscles, and not an atom of that foolish pride which would make her unwilling to run through the streets in her slippers, and with her hair streaming down her back, and to show herself in this disarray to the crowd around the circus tent, or the booths where ginger-bread was sold.

The intense desire she felt to overtake the thief was due not to grief at the loss of the money, but entirely to the fact that her father needed it to perfect the invention upon which he based all his hopes. She felt sure of being able to recover it for him, and it never once occurred to her that it would have been better for her to give her attention to him than to save his little fortune. She even imagined that he was already upon his feet, and about to join her to aid in the arrest of the man she had not lost sight of, though he could run much faster than she could.

The rain had ceased, but the wind was blowing a gale, and the numerous musicians who had sought shelter during the late shower, were again filling the square with the harsh braying of trombones and clashing of cymbals that would have drowned her voice completely, even if she attempted had to cry: "Stop thief!"

The man ran swiftly on, but whenever he passed a street-lamp she could see him distinctly. He was a tall, stalwart fellow, that is as nearly as she could judge, for he was enveloped from head to foot in a long India rubber coat.

She understood now how he had managed to escape from her hold whenever she attempted to seize him.

This was no time for retrospection, however. The man had reached the square, and instead of directing his course toward the middle of it, he turned to the left, toward a large building rudely constructed of planks.

Camille, who had also reached the square now, followed him into this dark and deserted corner without stopping to ask herself if the thief might not be lying in wait there to seize and strangle her; and this danger was the more to be dreaded from the fact that he had paused beside the rough wooden structure.

But Camille had gone too far to draw back.

"Ah, wretch! I have you," she cried, darting forward.

She was about to seize him when he suddenly disappeared. She heard the sharp click of a hastily closed door, and then she understood. The scoundrel belonged to the company of acrobats that was performing in the building he had just entered by the side door. Camille could not follow him by the same road, but there was nothing to prevent her from passing through the public entrance, and securing the thief's arrest.

"I did not see his face," she said to herself, "but I am sure I should recognize his hands."

Without losing a second, she slipped between the building and a tent where they were selling macaroons, and passing around the corner of the building, found herself in the midst of a crowd that had gathered around a platform upon which six musicians, dressed as Polish dancers, were playing, and a woman in short skirts was walking to and fro with a wand in her hand, like the fairy in a spectacular drama.

The performance had begun, but probably the hall was not full, for the ticket-seller was bawling at the top of his voice: "Walk in, gentlemen, walk in and see the last performance of the celebrated Zig-Zag of the Beni-Dig-Dig tribe. Buy your tickets here, gentlemen. General ad-

mission only twenty-five centimes. Reserved seats fifty centimes."

The woman took up the refrain in a shrill falsetto, boldly eying the crowd the while; but the pressing invitation did not appear to have much effect, for the loungers seemed in no haste to enter. Some were admiring the fairy, who was a black-eyed brunette, with well formed limbs, and really pretty in spite of her hard expression; others were teasing an enormous bull dog that responded by barking furiously.

Camille, undaunted, forced her way through the crowd and reached the entrance just as two young men, whose attire indicated that they were gentlemen of fashion who had come here merely for a lark, after dining at some popular restaurant a long way from the Place du Trône, came near.

They paused in astonishment on perceiving Camille, whose great beauty was apparent, even in her present disordered toilet, and they hastily stepped aside to let her pass.

She did so, but a few steps brought her to the doorway, which was guarded by an old, toothless hag, who said to her:

"You have to pay ten sous for a reserved seat, my little lady."

Camille put her hand in her pocket, found nothing, and made a despairing gesture on recollecting that she had neglected to provide herself with some silver before starting out to recover her father's twenty thousand francs.

The old woman understood, and remarked, with a sneer:

"One can not see the show for nothing, my dear. Ask these gentlemen to pay your way in."

As she spoke, she pointed to the two young men who were directly behind Camille.

"Here is pay for three," said the taller of the two gentlemen, throwing a five franc piece in the money-box, which was only about half full of copper coins.

Camille did not stop to thank him, but hastened on without looking back to see if the two fine gentlemen were following her. Vacant seats were plentiful, and she went and seated herself on the first row of benches, near a party of clerks and shop girls who were eating oranges and talking very loud.

The assemblage was a most disorderly one. The occupants of the reserved seats were laughing noisily; the other spectators, who were principally laborers, common soldiers and nurses, were hooting and imitating the cock and other animals.

But clear and shrill above all this clamor rose cries of: "Zig-Zag, Zig-Zag! It's Zig-Zag's turn now. Where is Zig-Zag? What has become of the rascal?"

Zig-Zag was evidently a great favorite with this fastidious audience, and Zig-Zag was late; Zig-Zag had failed to meet his obligations as an artist.

Camille, almost stunned by the uproar, now realized for the first time her folly in rashly rushing into this show? The thief had certainly entered the building, but how could she reasonably hope to find him in such a crowd. She said to herself, however, that as he had a key to the performers' door, he must be a member of the troupe, and she felt a strong suspicion that he was this very Zig-Zag whose name was in everybody's mouth.

Still, she began to be ashamed of being seen in a *negligée* toilet that had already attracted the attention of her neighbors, and to wonder if it would not have been wiser in her to have remained with her father, whom she had left still lying on the floor, and who, perhaps, had not yet recovered from his fall; and in another instant, with the impulsiveness that was her greatest fault, she resolved to return home without delay. Turning to see if she would have any difficulty in making her way to the door, she saw that the young gentleman who had paid her admission fee had taken a seat with his friend, in the second row of benches, directly behind her, and she heard these words interchanged in subdued tones:

"She's remarkably handsome. There's no question about it."

"I don't deny it, but she looks to me very much as if she were intoxicated."

Just then the clown appeared upon the platform, and, bowing awkwardly, opened a mouth that reached from ear to ear, and said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, we are about to continue the exercises by a new feat of Monsieur Zig-Zag's, the greatest tumbler and acrobat in both hemispheres. This great

artist, who has been unavoidably detained by urgent business, is about to appear—"

"What business detained him?" cried several voices.

"Circumstances over which he had no control compelled him to take a drink," replied the clown, with the utmost gravity.

And he vanished, followed by the shouts of the spectators.

"This Zig-Zag can not be the man I am looking for," thought Camille. "The thief would not have had time to change his clothing. Still, I will see."

Almost instantly Zig-Zag shot across the stage in a series of somersaults executed with lightning rapidity, the multitudinous spangles on his dress nearly blinding the spectators in his quick evolutions.

"It is he!" murmured the young girl. "It was the spangles on his costume that gleamed through the darkness, and that tore my fingers when I tried to seize him."

Camille still had tiny fragments of spangles under her nails. She could no longer doubt.

She waited, however; she wanted to see his hands, feeling sure that she could identify the thief by the unusual length and peculiar shape of his thumb.

And on asking herself once again how the scoundrel could have dressed so quickly, she recollected that he had worn a rubber overcoat, which he had only to cast aside to appear upon the stage in a costume suited to his rôle.

Consequently, there was nothing left for Camille to do but to cry out as soon as he had ceased his somersaults: "It is he who robbed my father!" and she did not shrink from the scandal and the danger that such an unexpected interruption would be sure to create.

Zig-Zag paused at last, directly in front of her and close to the row of argand lamps that served as footlights in this rude theater.

Camille then perceived that Zig-Zag was masked like the Harlequin of ancient Italian Comedy. A tiny black silk mask concealed the upper part of his face, leaving visible only his smiling mouth, white teeth, smoothly shaven chin, well rounded neck, and a tiny bit of a rose-colored tunic, thickly spangled with silver.

His eyes gleamed brightly through the holes in the mask, and Camille fancied they were fixed upon her.

But it was not the acrobat's face that interested her. She was looking for his hands, and she discovered, with no slight amazement, that the illustrious tumbler was imprisoned, from his feet to his shoulders, in a linen bag spangled like the tunic. This bound his arms tightly to his side, and concealed from sight not only his hands, but his shoes, which must bear the marks of his race through the mud from the Boulevard Voltaire.

Had he arrayed himself in this fashion to circumvent his pursuer? No; she recollected that this accouterment was indispensable to Zig-Zag in the execution of his great feat, which consisted in leaping high in the air, coming down perpendicularly on the top of his head, righting himself with a spring, only to repeat the same operation a dozen times in quick succession.

The sack prevented him from making any use of his hands, and in this consisted the chief difficulty of this perilous exercise, invented, it is said, by the Aïssaoua, the savage Arabs, who devour scorpions, glass, and the leaves of the thorny cactus plant.

Any ordinary man would have broken his neck in attempting to execute such a feat, but Zig-Zag escaped without any injury to his spinal column, and bowed gracefully to the spectators, who applauded in the most frantic manner—so frantically, indeed, that it was evident he would be obliged to repeat the performance.

Camille hesitated an instant. This famous acrobat must have more than one feat in his *repertoire*, and before the close of the performance he would doubtless reappear in a costume that would disclose to view his face and hands; but she had no time to lose. Her father might be seriously injured, and he certainly must be greatly troubled by his daughter's prolonged absence. Camille must rejoin him as speedily as possible, so without further hesitation, she sprung up and cried, pointing to the acrobat who had paused to take breath:

"Arrest him. He is a thief!"

This was quite sufficient to arouse a tempest. The audience unanimously espoused the cause of their favorite artist, and from every part of the hall resounded yells of "Silence!" "Put her out!" "Make her apologize!" "She is a liar!" "No; she's mad. Take her to Charenton!"

The acrobat's more enthusiastic champions even rose and shook their fists at Camille, who surveyed them with lofty scorn. She was very pale, but she was not afraid; and she continued, in a clear ringing voice:

"I tell you that man has just stolen twenty thousand francs from my father! Search him, and the money will be found upon him."

This denunciation brought down another shower of insults upon her.

"Turn the liar out!" "Your father hasn't a penny, nor you either!" "Zig-Zag is richer than you are!" "Send for the police to take her to Saint-Lazare!"

Zig-Zag took no part in the disturbance. He could not cross his arms, for his arms were not free, but he assumed a disdainful attitude, and shrugged his shoulders scornfully.

The tumult soon became so deafening that the fairy in short skirts, whom Camille had seen on the platform outside, came in, and after addressing a questioning nod to the clown, instantly disappeared, only to make her appearance a few moments afterward with a policeman, to whom she pointed out the woman who had been the cause of the disturbance.

The affair was becoming serious, and poor Camille perceived now, when it was too late, that she had placed herself in a very dangerous position. She had left her father's house in a toilet that would not impress one in her favor, and she now found herself in imminent danger of being ignominiously expelled from the hall, or even of being taken to the station-house.

To whom could she turn for aid in her extremity? Her eyes met those of the young man who had paid her admission fee when she entered the hall. He was watching her with more curiosity than benevolence in his gaze, but he had a kind face, and she thought she might appeal to him.

"Sir," she said, with deep emotion, "you doubtless think very ill of me after the scene I have just caused; but when you know who I am, I am sure that you will not refuse to undertake my defense. I swear that I have only spoken the truth in accusing this man."

Camille's appeal was interrupted by the policeman who laid his hand upon her arm.

'Do not touch me," said the girl, indignantly pushing him aside.

"Take her out!" yelled the spectators, applauding vociferously.

Zig-Zag, who had been watching the proceedings from the platform, did not await the result, but making a low bow, executed a double somersault that carried him off the stage.

"I am ready to follow you," said Camille, turning quietly to the policeman. "But do not presume to touch me."

Impressed, doubtless, by the quiet dignity of her manner, the young gentleman whose protection she had asked decided to interfere.

"I will accompany you, mademoiselle," he said, in a low tone.

His companion smiled sneeringly, being very evidently of the opinion that his friend's conduct was absurd in the highest degree; but he would not desert him, so they both acted as escorts to Camille, who was following the policeman out of the hall.

As they stepped out into the square, she turned to her protector and said:

"I reside near here, in the house of my father, Monsieur Monistrol, and I should consider it a great favor if you would accompany me home."

"Monistrol!" ejaculated the young man, "Jacques Monistrol, the engineer."

"Yes, sir," replied Camille. "I am Monsieur Monistrol's daughter. Are you acquainted with him?"

"I can not say that I am," replied the young man, "but I shall soon be brought into frequent contact with him, for my father entered into a sort of partnership with him a few days ago."

"Indeed! Then you must be—"

"Julien Gémozac, mademoiselle, and I bless the lucky chance that enables me to be of some slight service to you."

Camille, surprised and delighted, scrutinized her champion more attentively, and noticed for the first time since their meeting that M. Julien was really a very handsome young man.

This son of the wealthy iron manufacturer looked not

unlike a young English nobleman, with his regular features, fair curling hair, long silken mustache, white skin, large blue eyes, and rather proud mouth, and this very pleasing countenance wore an expression of mingled frankness and good humor.

Julien, in his turn, greatly admired the more severe beauty of Camille, and reproached himself for having momentarily mistaken her for an adventuress, though he was certainly excusable for his mistake under the circumstances.

The friend who listened to this explanation said nothing, but his rather mocking smile indicated strong doubts of the innocence of the young woman who had left her father's roof to run after an acrobat.

The policeman had not the same reasons for remaining neutral, however, so he interposed with unmistakable rudeness.

"That can't be allowed," he said, coarsely. "You disturbed the performance, and consequently you will have to go with me to the station-house, and explain your conduct to the corporal there."

"To the station-house!" repeated Camille, turning despairingly to her protector.

The moment had come for Julien to interfere. He felt satisfied that Camille was telling the truth, and he could not desert the daughter of his father's new partner. He might have hesitated, however, had she been unprepossessing in appearance, but beauty is the best of credentials for a woman, and he resolved to see her safely out of the scrape.

"I will be responsible for mademoiselle," said he.

"That is all very well, but I do not know you," growled the policeman.

"You probably know my father by name and reputation—Pierre Gémozac."

"The owner of the large iron foundry on the Quai de Jemmapes? I should think I did know him. My brother works there."

"Well, I live there. Here is my card, and if you will call there and ask for me to-morrow, you will find me at home between the hours of twelve and two."

"And I reside with my father," added Camille. "If it were daylight, you could see the house from here. If

you do not believe me, you can accompany me to my door and see for yourself. But you would do much better to arrest the man who has just stolen twenty thousand francs from us. You will find him there in that hall—"

"Very well, we will see about that to-morrow. The troupe will not leave before the close of the fair. I will report the case to my corporal, and give him this gentleman's card."

"All right, my worthy friend. You can tell him that I am at his service at any time. Besides, there is nothing to prevent him from making inquiries at Monsieur Monistrol's house, as well, if he chooses."

"At No. 292 Boulevard Voltaire," added Camille, who had regained all her wonted composure. "But do not detain me. My father was roughly handled by that wretch, and even if he is not seriously injured, he must be very anxious about me."

"After all, you have been guilty of no very grave offense," muttered the officer, "so you may return home, mademoiselle; but be careful not to get yourself in such a scrape again."

"Thanks, my fine fellow," said Gémozac. "I shall be glad to prove my gratitude to you by promoting your brother if he is a good workman. Take my arm, mademoiselle."

Camille needed no urging. She realized now the danger she had incurred, and could think only of reassuring her father; but as she turned to walk away with her protector, Julien's friend followed them, and stepping up to his comrade's side, said cautiously:

"It is doubtless very delightful to play the part of Don Quixote with such a pretty girl, but don't forget that you have an appointment at the Café Anglais at twelve o'clock to-night."

Julien stopped short, confronted him, and said by way of response:

"Mademoiselle, this is Monsieur Alfred de Fresnay, who begs an introduction to you, and who places himself, like your humble servant, entirely at your disposal."

Camille bowed, and so did Alfred; though the latter found it a little difficult to hide his discomfiture, for he was a gentleman who had little taste for romantic adventures and persecuted damsels.

"Pray let us walk on," murmured the young girl.

Julien complied with her request, but had the good taste not to begin a conversation that certainly would not interest Mademoiselle Monistrol at such a moment, and Alfred walked along behind them with rather a crestfallen air.

Only four or five minutes afterward all three of them reached the board fence that the acrobat had cleared at a single bound. Camille had been obliged to open the gate to pursue him, and she had not stopped to close it after her. Consequently, she was not surprised to find it open as she had left it; but she vaguely hoped to see some signs of her father, who would not have been likely to wait patiently at his fireside for his daughter's return from the dangerous expedition upon which she had embarked. But she not only saw no signs of Monistrol, but no light shone from the windows of the modest dwelling.

"He must have gone out in search of me," the girl said to herself, making a futile attempt to overcome her misgivings.

"Is it here that you reside, mademoiselle?" inquired Julien.

"Yes; come in," she replied, stepping ahead of him.

She ran straight to the door, which had been left open like the gate, and entered the hall. A death-like silence pervaded the house, and oppressed by a grim presentiment of approaching misfortune, she paused, afraid to go any further alone.

"Father!" she cried, huskily, "come here. It is I—Camille."

No one responded to the call.

Gémozac and his friend were close behind the girl, and turning, Camille seized the former convulsively by the arm.

"I am afraid," she whispered.

"And I feel by no means tranquil in mind," muttered Alfred. "This house looks to me very like a regular cut-throats' den."

Julien, being an inveterate smoker, was never without matches, so he now drew a box from his pocket, and on striking a light, discovered a candle standing on a small table in the hall.

"I will go first, mademoiselle," he said, arming himself with the candle.

"No, let me show you the way," replied Camille.

"But mademoiselle, the thief may have had an accomplice, and as there might be some danger in that case, you had better allow me to go first."

The three entered the little dining-room almost at the same instant, however; but the curtains had fallen, thus concealing the little drawing-room from view.

"Father, are you here?" cried Camille.

There was no response. Gémozac stepped forward, and lifting the portière, perceived a man lying motionless upon the floor between the table and the fire-place.

Camille also saw the prostrate form, and recognized it.

"Oh, my God!" she cried wildly, "he killed him!" And before Julien could prevent it, she threw herself upon her father's body.

Her words were only too true. The unfortunate inventor gave no sign of life. Seizing his hand, Camille found that it was already cold in death. She took him in her arms, and tried to lift him, but her strength failed her, and with a low cry, she sunk insensible upon the floor beside him.

"A murder! Well, this caps the climax!" growled Fresnay, recoiling hastily. "You have certainly got us into a nice mess."

"Silence, man, and help me first to lift this poor child," said Gémozac, hastily.

"And where the devil shall we take her?"

"To her bed, of course. Her chamber must be on the floor above."

"And afterward?"

"Afterward you must run to the nearest station-house, tell them that a murder has just been committed here, and bring some officers and a commissioner of police back with you."

"A nice errand you are sending me on! Catch me ever attending another gingerbread fair in your company!"

"If you desert me now, I swear that I will never have anything more to do with you while I live. What you just said is unworthy of you. Is it possible that you are utterly heartless? Come, take the candle, and walk on ahead, I can carry her very well alone."

Fresnay obeyed his friend's instructions, though not without some grumbling. Camille's room was on the left

of the landing, and they had no difficulty in recognizing it by its little white-curtained bed.

Julien laid her gently upon it, then took a carafé of water from the toilet-table, and sprinkled a few drops upon her face. She opened her eyes, but closed them almost instantly, murmuring a few unintelligible words as she did so; then covering her face with her hands, as if to shut out some frightful vision, she again relapsed into a state of comple unconsciousness.

Gémozac was no doctor, and he had not the slightest idea of what ought to be done in such a case.

"You had better bring a physician, too," he said to his friend, who sulkily replied:

"Why don't you send me for a nurse, too, while you are about it? Upon my word! I really believe you have lost your mind. What can induce you to insist upon mixing yourself up in an affair that does not interest either of us in the least?"

"Speak for yourself, if you please. Didn't you hear me say that this young girl's father became my father's partner in business a few days ago? He was probably killed by a scoundrel who tried to rob him of the money he received from my father this very morning."

"How do you know? Your *protégée* is evidently half crazy, and I am utterly at a loss to understand her strange chase after an acrobat."

"Enough! I will not stand here and wrangle by her bedside. Follow me."

Julien picked up the candle, went down-stairs, and proceeded to examine the body of the murdered man.

"You certainly will not try to deny that this man came to his death by strangling?" he said at last, turning to the skeptical Alfred. "The fingers of the assassin have left unmistakable imprints upon the unfortunate man's throat."

Alfred stooped, examined the body with more curiosity than emotion, straightened himself up, and said:

"Fingers! I should call them claws. It was not a man's hand that made these black marks upon both sides of the throat. It was the hand of a gorilla! And what a thumb! It tore the skin and penetrated deep into the flesh.

"Say it is the work of the devil, if you like, provided

you will go for the police," replied Gémozac, pushing his reluctant friend toward the door, and Alfred yielded, though not without asking:

"Why don't you go yourself?"

"Because I can not leave Mademoiselle Monistrol alone in her present condition. When we get some one else here, I shall be very willing to go, though I shall return to-morrow with my mother, who will certainly take the orphan girl under her protection. But until the police arrive, I must remain to watch over her."

A wild, heart-broken cry resounded from the room above.

"Do you hear that?" cried Julien; "I must hasten to her at once. Go, I beg of you, but return as soon as possible. I am not anxious to spend the night with a murdered man and this grief-stricken girl."

Fresnay was not a bad fellow at heart, but he had the Parisian fault of taking nothing seriously. Monistrol and his daughter were both strangers to him; he had an engagement to sup with some gay friends that evening, and the idea of becoming mixed up in a criminal affair was extremely distasteful to him; still, he had promised Julien that he would inform the police, and not knowing exactly where to find a station-house in that vicinity, he directed his steps toward the Place du Trône.

Before reaching it, however, he met two policemen—the one who had threatened to arrest Camille was now off duty. Telling them that a murder had just been committed only a short distance off, in a house that he described to them, he asked them if they would attend to summoning a commissioner of police.

They answered in the affirmative, and were about to ask him for further information; but unfortunately an empty hackney-coach was passing at the time, and the temptation proving too strong for him, Fresnay said, hurriedly:

"You can not make a mistake. It is on the right hand side, and only a short distance down the Boulevard. There is a board fence in front of the house."

Then leaping into the carriage, he cried to the driver:

"Café Anglais—Boulevard des Italiens."

"A good riddance to you, humbug!" growled the elder of the policemen.

"It's not worth while to trouble ourselves," replied the other. "It is only an April Fool's Day joke."

And they tranquilly continued their round.

CHAPTER II.

PIERRE GEMOZAC, one of the iron kings of the day, and worth his millions, resided only a short distance from the foundry where he had amassed his fortune, on the anything but romantic banks of the Saint-Martin Canal.

It must be admitted, however, that he had built himself a palatial residence there, and that the Quai de Jemmapes is not very far from the heart of Paris when one owns comfortable carriages and excellent horses. The close proximity to the noisy workshops had its inconveniences, but the heavy thud of the hammers and the snorting of the steam-engines was sweet music in the ears of the worthy man who had acquired his wealth by building locomotives, and who had begun life as a common machinist.

He had married late in life; and by his wife, who was much better born and younger than himself, he had had only one child, a son whom he idolized, though this son caused him much more anxiety than satisfaction.

Julien Gémozac, though he had arrived at the age of twenty-eight, was still only a fashionable idler, who did not seem in the least inclined to regard life seriously, to the very great disappointment of his father, who had dreamed of making his only son his successor. Julien belonged to a fashionable club, led a very gay life, played heavily, and was an enthusiastic patron of the turf.

Nevertheless, he had pursued his studies with a very fair degree of success; and was the fortunate possessor of a civil engineer's diploma which he had no intention whatever of using.

His mother spoiled him; his father said to himself by way of consolation: "He must sow his wild oats;" but this seemed to be a long and tedious task to his anxious parent.

Until his rather too light-hearted son should become more deeply impressed with a sense of his responsibilities, his doting parent required only two things of him—that

Julien should reside under the paternal roof, and that he should always be present at the family breakfast.

It not unfrequently happened that he made his appearance with haggard features and sunken eyes, but he was never sulky, though his father sometimes lectured him gently, and his mother, who was anxious for him to marry, proposed one heiress after another as claimants for his favorable consideration.

The tragical death of poor Monistrol had not been without its effect on the Gémozac household.

Julien did not appear at breakfast the next morning, nor had he returned home at all the previous night.

His anxious parents passed a very miserable day, for it was not until six o'clock in the evening that they learned what had detained him.

Deserted by his friend Fresnay, Julien had spent the rest of the night anxiously awaiting the arrival of the authorities, and in watching over Mlle. Monistrol, who had passed from one nervous spasm into another, and it was not until nearly daybreak that he was able to summon some passers-by to his assistance.

The police were again notified, and made their appearance promptly this time; but Camille, when questioned, could give only incoherent answers, and Julien, knowing little or nothing about the circumstances, could not enlighten the commissioner to any great extent, for the scene at the performance was no conclusive evidence against the accused.

Mme. Gémozac hastened to the home of the orphan as soon as she was apprised of the tragedy, and found that brain fever had set in, and that the physician would not be responsible for Mlle. Monistrol's life.

It was necessary to bury her father without her knowledge, but Pierre Gémozac and his son followed the unfortunate inventor to the grave as chief mourners.

A week passed before there was any decided change in the situation; for Camille, though now convalescent, seemed plunged in a sort of stupor that paralyzed all her faculties. The detectives were seeking the culprit, but had discovered nothing which would serve as a clew. Mme. Gémozac had placed a woman she could trust, and also a sister of charity in charge of the sick girl, and not

only visited her frequently, but was busily engaged in devising plans for her future welfare.

The unfortunate girl he had befriended had excited a deep interest in Julien's heart, and he had not yet forgiven Alfred Fresnay for his selfish desertion. Still, he was gradually resuming his former habits. The orphan's terrible bereavement was much less fresh in his mind, and he was beginning to be less interested in the discovery of Monistrol's mysterious murder.

On the eighth day after the catastrophe he inquired at the breakfast-table, as usual, how Camille was progressing, and learned that she had left her bed for the first time the evening before.

"We shall soon receive a call from her," replied Mme. Gémozac, "for she insists upon coming here to thank us."

"I shall be delighted to see her," replied M. Gémozac, "not only because I want to tell her how deeply I sympathize with her in her bereavement, but also because I have some good news for her. Monistrol's invention will yield a fortune. If the business continues to prosper as well as everything seems to indicate, his daughter will be very rich, and I shall make a great deal of money out of my interest in the patent. After this, she can live in much better style, if she chooses; for by the end of the year I shall owe her a good round sum, and in the meantime I will advance her any money she may need."

"That ought to console her," remarked Julien.

"I doubt if she will ever be consoled," replied Mme. Gémozac. "I have been studying her a little during her convalesence, and I think I understand her. She is a character, this girl of twenty years. She does not seem in the least anxious about herself, or in regard to what is likely to become of her. She talks only of her father, and of avenging his death."

"I am very much afraid that she will never succeed in that. The investigation is still in progress, but no definite information in regard to the assassin has yet been secured. The acrobat, the accused, was examined day before yesterday, but he succeeded in establishing an alibi. He will be confronted by her, undoubtedly, as soon as she is in a condition to give her testimony; but I am almost certain that she will not be able to identify him."

"There is very little chance of it, I must admit; for she

told me that she saw only the hand of the murderer," replied Mme. Gémozac.

"Ah, yes, the hand! That seems to haunt her incessantly. During her first nervous attack, she kept crying: 'Oh, that hand—it is coming nearer! It threatens my father! Drive it away!' She was delirious, you know. It is true that the physician said at the post-mortem examination that her father was strangled by an enormous hand; and I, too, was satisfied of the fact when I first examined the body. But that is no clew after all, for nearly all assassins have enormous hands. Don't you recollect that a while ago nothing was talked of but the extraordinary size of Troppmann's thumb?"

Just then a footman entered the breakfast-room, a very unusual occurrence, by the way, as M. Gémozac insisted upon breakfasting alone with his wife and son, and the servants had orders never to come in unsummoned.

"What is it, Jean?" asked M. Gémozac, frowning.

"Mademoiselle Monistrol wishes to see you and madame, sir. I told her that you were at breakfast."

"No matter. Show her in," replied his master, promptly.

When Camille entered the room, Julien scarcely recognized her. He had seen her only in the costume she wore on the evening of their first meeting. He had left her in the height of a violent fever, with her clothing disordered, her hair unbound, and her features distorted with suffering. She appeared now under an entirely different aspect: plainly dressed in black, with her hair arranged in a fashion that admirably suited the contour of her face and head, and pallid with suffering; but this pallor only enhanced her beauty, and imparted to her a charm that impressed young Gémozac deeply.

The father, who saw her now for the first time, gazed at her in speechless admiration, but Mme. Gémozac rose, took her affectionately by the hand, and seated her near her husband, who scarcely knew what to say, though he felt most kindly disposed toward her.

Camille relieved him of his embarrassment by saying quietly:

"I have been impatient for an opportunity to thank you, sir. My father was indebted to you for the happiness

that brightened the last day of his life; and it is not to Monsieur Gémozac alone that I must ever feel grateful."

These last words were addressed to the son and to the mother, who took it upon herself to answer for all.

"My dear child," she said, kindly, "you are now almost one of our family, and we have only done our duty; Julien in assisting you in a most trying moment, and I in caring for you afterward. My husband will do his in watching over your financial interests and managing your property. But you did very wrong to venture out to-day. It was extremely imprudent in your present state of health."

"The physician gave me permission to do so, madame. I am quite well again. You will need no better proof of this than the fact that I underwent a long examination yesterday without feeling any ill effects from it."

"What! the magistrate did not fear to subject you to such a painful ordeal? I think he might have waited at least a few days longer."

"I called upon him unsolicited, and begged him to grant me a hearing. I made a great mistake, however, for he attached no importance to my testimony. He takes me for a lunatic, or rather, he thinks I only dreamed what I told him. Perhaps he even suspects me of being the assassin's accomplice. He did not say so, but I thought I saw it in his eyes."

"Then he must be an idiot or worse than an idiot," exclaimed Julien, hotly.

"He blamed me for having abandoned my father to run after the wretch who had just killed him."

"But you did not know that your father was seriously injured. I was with you when you first found him lying lifeless upon the floor, and I said as much to the magistrate."

"He pretends that the assassin must have been informed by some one that my father had been paid a large sum of money that day."

"I hope he is not so stupid as to suppose that you were the person who apprised him of the fact. It would be much more sensible in him to arrest all the acrobats who performed at the fair, and seek the murderer among them."

"He has released the man I accused. There seems to

be nothing left for him to do now but to send me to prison," said Camille, bitterly.

"Ah!" exclaimed M. Gémozac, "it is quite time for me to testify that you have always been the most devoted and affectionate of daughters. I have known Monistrol a long time, and he always spoke of you in the highest terms, and often told me how nobly you had aided and encouraged him in the many trying ordeals through which he had passed.

"You were his only comfort, for your mother died in bringing you into the world. You had never been separated from him, and it was chiefly for your sake that he desired to acquire wealth. By perseverance and industry he succeeded at last; but he did not live to enjoy his success. I am here, however, to give his daughter a father's care, and your future shall be my care. I shall deserve no credit for this, however, for you are rich, very rich. Your share in the profits in the copartnership I formed with Monistrol will yield you, this year, an income of at least fifty thousand francs, and I shall immediately make such arrangements as will enable you to live in a style befitting my partner's daughter and heiress."

"I thank you, sir, but I prefer to make no change in my mode of life. I have always been poor, and I am perfectly content with my lot."

"But I shall be obliged to pay you this money, even against your will, for I can not keep what does not belong to me. Besides, how can you do without the money? Your father left you nothing beside his patent."

"The house in which he died belongs to me. It was my mother's only dowry on her marriage."

"But even if you should rent it, it would not yield you enough to purchase food," said M. Gémozac, smiling.

"Nor can you live there alone," added his wife. "I shall endeavor to secure suitable apartments for you in this immediate neighborhood. It is not a very gay one, it is true, but we shall be neighbors, and so be able to see each other every day. If you consent, I will also find two trusty women to serve you."

"I am very grateful to you, madame," Camille answered gently; "but I have made up my mind not to leave the house in which I have always lived. My old nurse is in Montreuil, and she is willing to come and

stay with me, so I need not trouble you to find any other servants for me."

"But you will need money to live upon," replied M. Gémozac, rather brusquely, for he could not understand the young girl's persistent refusal, "and I shall be in your debt to a very considerable amount before the end of the year."

"Then I must ask you to keep the money for me, paying over to me only what I may require to defray my expenses."

"That sounds much more reasonable," said M. Gémozac, rubbing his hands. "But you must understand that my purse is at your disposal, and that you can draw upon it as you please. I will invest any money you do not use, and in a year or two, mademoiselle, you will be a splendid *parti*, with any number of suitors to choose from."

"I have not the slightest intention of marrying."

"But why not, my dear child?" inquired Mme. Gémozac.

"Because I have a mission to fulfill."

"A mission?"

"Yes. I am resolved to avenge my father. As the authorities are powerless, I will do what they can not, or will not, do. I will ferret out the assassin, and drag him before them, and then we will see if they refuse to listen when I say, 'Here he is!'"

"And you hope to find, unaided, this scoundrel whose face you did not even see, my son tells me?"

"I shall find him. I feel almost positive of it. God will not allow the wretch to escape me as he escaped those who sought him so indifferently. I will pursue him to the ends of the earth, if need be. Nothing shall deter me; and if I die with my task still unfulfilled—"

"Do not talk of dying at your age," interrupted Mme. Gémozac. "Time will assuage your very natural grief, and you will forget the past in thinking of the future. Nothing is eternal in this world, my dear Camille. Some day or other you will be loved by a man worthy of you, and you will love him in return. We women are born to be wives and mothers. You talk of a mission—our mission is to make our husbands happy, and to rear our children."

"I know it, madame; but if I ever marry any one it will be the man who brings my father's murderer to justice."

"Take care, mademoiselle," said M. Gémozac, gayly, for he had no idea that their young visitor was really in earnest. "If you persist in this resolve, you will perhaps be obliged to marry a detective."

"No," replied Camille, firmly. "A detective would only be doing his duty in ferreting out and arresting an assassin, and I should be under no personal obligation to him. I speak of the man who might assist me in my work merely out of regard or sympathy for me. If such an one succeeded in his efforts, I should not begrudge him his reward."

"If I were a younger man I should certainly try to win the prize," laughed the manufacturer. "Under such conditions there are many who will be only too happy to serve you."

Julien said nothing; but his mother read in his eyes that he would not be sorry to enter the lists. And in fact, though he was not yet exactly in love with Mademoiselle Monistrol, Julien said to himself that it would be a fine thing to win the hand of his father's youthful partner. It was not her fortune that tempted him, for he had money enough for both; but Camille was very beautiful, and her originality attracted him. Besides, he was beginning to tire of his aimless existence, and this would be an excellent opportunity to put an end to a life of pleasure that had ceased to amuse him. The question was to know if Mlle. Monistrol would accept him as an ally, and though bashfulness was not his besetting sin by any means, he dared not offer his services for fear that she would decline them.

"I admire your energy, my dear Camille," said Mme. Gémozac, "but I wonder how you will go to work to accomplish your object."

"I have no idea yet. God will inspire me."

"But you will allow us to see you occasionally, will you not?"

"Certainly, madame; only I must beg you to grant me entire liberty. I must be free to come and go when I like. I may even be compelled to leave Paris—for a time."

"Money is called the sinews of war," interposed M. Gémozac; "and it is quite as necessary in traveling as in

waging war. So you must do me the favor to call at my office to-morrow; but no—you need not take the trouble—my cashier will bring you five thousand francs now. Will that do for a beginning?"

"That is much more than I shall need, sir."

The wealthy manufacturer stepped to one of the speaking-tubes, which were always close at hand, even when he was breakfasting, applied his mouth and then his ear to it; then, turning to Camille, said:

"That is all right. When you want more money, you have only to let me know. Now, a word in regard to your plan. I do not positively disapprove of it, but I advise you to take no decisive step until you are better informed on the subject; for I think, with my son, that there is nothing to prove that the acrobat you accuse is the culprit."

"He is the culprit, nevertheless. I am certain of it."

"If that be the case, he must have decamped before this time."

"Then I shall follow him up."

"It is by no means certain that he has gone, however," said Julien. The Gingerbread Fair is still in progress on the Place du Trône, and as the scoundrel succeeded in establishing an alibi when he was examined by the judge of instruction, he no longer feels any fear of arrest. I will make inquiries concerning him, however, if mademoiselle has no objections."

"I thank you, sir," replied Camille, promptly. "I shall continue my efforts, but I gladly accept the assistance you so generously offer."

"Bravo!" said the father. "Here is the fellow-laborer you were seeking, my dear child; but I advise you not to count too much upon his co-operation. My son spends most of his time at the club, and in other equally objectionable places; so if the interest he takes in your cause will cure him of his bad habits, I shall be under very great obligations to you. But I dare not flatter myself yet that you have converted him."

"You shall see," said Julien, a little hurt by this lack of confidence.

Mme. Gémozac refrained from taking any part in the discussion. She thought, with her husband, that Julien would do well to abandon the life he was leading, but she

also found that this new undertaking might involve him in serious danger. She liked Camille, but the independent theories the young girl had just advanced shocked her a little; and, foreseeing that such an association would almost inevitably result in a marriage, the prudent mother did not feel inclined to encourage it, thinking, with justice, that Julien might do much better in the social circles in which his parents moved.

Just then the cashier entered with five rolls of gold in one hand and in the other a receipt, which Camille promptly signed; for she did not blush to accept this advance upon the inheritance her unfortunate father had bequeathed to her.

"Do you know, Madamoiselle," continued Gémozac, "that I feel very uneasy when I think of your living alone in that isolated house in which your father was robbed and killed? Why do you insist upon remaining there? You must have a trusty body guard, at all events. Suppose I send you, every night, one of my employes, an old soldier, a regular Hercules, who is quite capable of holding a whole band of brigands at bay?"

"Thanks, but I have Brigitte."

"And who is Brigitte?"

"My nurse, sir. She is as strong as a man, and afraid of nothing. She will be sufficient protection."

"If I were in your place, I would not depend upon her too implicitly. Besides, she is not yet at her post."

"Pardon me, sir; she has been with me since yesterday. I went to Montreuil for her, and she left everything to accompany me home. She is waiting for me now, so you must permit me to take leave of you."

Gémozac arose. His wife was already on her feet, for she did not care to prolong the interview, though she intended to pay Mlle. Monistrol a visit the following day, and have a long and serious talk with her. She kissed the young girl affectionately on both cheeks, and accompanied her as far as the door, while the father and son, of course, contented themselves with shaking the hand Camille offered to them.

The brave girl had said all she had to say, and carried away with her, in her little leather satchel, money enough to defray not only her personal expenses, but the expenses of her campaign for at least a month. She knew, too,

that she had a warm friend in the person of Julian Gémozac. Still, she depended chiefly upon her own efforts for success, and she resolved not to lose a moment in beginning operations.

She had come to the Quai de Jemmapes in a carriage, and she now ordered the coachman to take her straight to the Place du Trône. She passed her home, and even saw Brigitte at the window, but she did not stop. She was already blaming herself for not having examined the booths on the fair-grounds before, and was impatient to satisfy herself that the troupe to which Zig-Zag belonged was still performing there.

A fair, like a theater, is always at a stand-still in the morning. The place is deserted, and silence reigns everywhere. There is never any bustle and excitement. A few *gamins* may be seen hanging around, or playing hide-and-seek among the tents. Here and there one sees a toy or fruit merchant arranging his wares, or a tight-rope dancer seated upon a stool mending a shabby tunic, or the strong man, returning from market in a thread-bare overcoat with a basket on his arm.

It is the time when the artists whom the public applaud in the evening become very commonplace and approachable mortals, ever ready to take a social glass with the wine merchant.

Camille was well aware of this fact, and she resolved to profit by it. She even hoped that chance might bring her face to face with the celebrated Zig-Zag, and so give her an opportunity to see his hands. He concealed them in performing his famous feat, but off the stage they must certainly be visible, and they could not be mistaken for those of any other acrobat by reason of the enormous thumb in which the judge of instruction refused to believe, being very evidently of the opinion that the girl's terror had magnified the object, and impaired her sense of vision,

She took care to alight from the carriage a short distance from the Place du Trône, in order not to attract attention. She found nearly all the tents and other places of amusement closed, as the performances did not begin until four o'clock in the afternoon; but there were some signs of life around several of them. That in which Zig-Zag had performed seemed to be deserted, however. No

sound came from it, nor did any smoke from the stove-pipe that projected from the roof of the long, red wagon in which the members of the troupe slept.

This strange vehicle, a sort of Noah's ark, stood behind the building. The two bony horses that dragged it, unharnessed now, and tied to one of the wheels, were browsing on the scanty turf of the public highway. A man in a blouse was sitting, with arms folded, on the pole, with a short black pipe in his mouth.

This man had a large, florid face, adorned with an enormous pug nose, and a mouth that extended almost from ear to ear.

Camille did not recognize him at first, on account of the change in his attire; but, on looking at him more closely, she recollected that she had seen him before, for he was the very clown who had announced Zig-Zag's speedy appearance to the impatient audience. But his jovial air had vanished, his eyes were as glassy as those of a blind man, and his face wore an expression of the deepest despondency.

Some misfortune had certainly befallen him; and this very evident fact furnished Camille with a pretext for entering into conversation with him.

Camille approached him boldly, and interrupted his reverie by tapping him on the shoulder. He had not noticed her approach, and he now gazed at her with an air of bewilderment that rendered his appearance still more grotesque.

Camille knew how to deal with persons of this class.

"Ah, well, my worthy friend, things do not seem to be going to suit you to-day," she said, pleasantly.

"That's not strange, when a man hasn't money enough to buy a little tobacco," growled the man, taking his pipe from his mouth, and shaking the empty bowl.

"That's a great reason for looking as solemn as an owl!"

"It's quite enough, I think. It's very easy to talk, but I'd like to see how you would stand it if you hadn't had anything to eat for twenty-four hours, and had no tobacco to keep hunger away. Besides, what business is it of yours? I never saw you before, and I don't feel in the humor for talking."

"I am surprised that you don't recognize me. You were present the night I was turned out of the hall be-

cause they said I interrupted the performance. Don't you recollect that the policeman threatened to take me to the station-house?"

"Oh, yes, I know you now; but if you hadn't spoken to me, I should never have guessed you were the person who pretended that Zig-Zag had robbed you. You must have made a mistake, for the magistrate who examined him could find no proofs against him. Is it true that several thousand francs were stolen from you?"

"Not from me, but from my father—and the thief killed him."

"Then it was not Zig-Zag. He's a scoundrel, but he wouldn't have the courage to kill a man. Besides, the officers came here and searched us and our trunks; but they found nothing, and Zig-Zag proved that he had not been out of the building during the performance. But you can congratulate yourself upon having done us plenty of injury, my little lady."

"Why, is one of your other comrades accused?" asked Camille, quickly. "Bring me face to face with him, and I will testify that I do not recognize him."

"Oh, no one is accused, but the troupe is in disgrace; and we have been obliged to close up because we don't make a penny, and for two whole days I haven't had a square meal."

"You shall have one to-day, my friend," said the girl, drawing a twenty-franc piece from her purse.

The man pocketed it without any ceremony.

"Good luck to you!" he exclaimed. "You have a kind heart. The little chap will have something to eat now."

And two big tears rolled down his florid cheeks.

"Have you a child?" inquired Camille, with interest.

"Yes, a little shaver who is going on thirteen, and whose stomach never seems to get enough. Ah, if I had only myself to feed, I could get along very well, for I am used to going hungry—but poor Georget—it goes hard with him."

"And your wife?"

"My wife!" sneered the unfortunate clown, "she has run away with that scoundrel Zig-Zag."

"What!" exclaimed Camille, "Zig-Zag, the acrobat I pursued to the door of your show; he has run away, you say?"

"He decamped night before last, and took Amanda with him," was the doleful response. "A good-for-nothing hussy I picked up when she was begging on the public highway. She owes everything to me. I taught her to dance and perform on the tight-rope, and was fool enough to marry her; and only three years afterward, she leaves me for a rascal who isn't worth the rope to hang him."

"But how could she have made up her mind to desert her child?"

"Oh, Georget isn't her child. Thank God! I have been married twice, and if my boy's mother was alive, I shouldn't be where I am. She fell, and was killed, while performing at the Guibray Fair. She was a good wife to me, and took good care of the little chap, too. Ah! he isn't sorry Amanda is gone, I can tell you. She was always scolding and abusing him, and I was coward enough not to put a stop to it. When I saw Zig-Zag hanging around her, I never once suspected that there was anything wrong. And now she has gone off with him, and taken all my money with her,—three hundred francs that I had saved penny by penny. It serves me right though for being such a fool."

The poor devil was actually weeping.

His sincere sorrow touched Mlle. Monistrol, but did not make her forget Zig-Zag. This was an excellent opportunity to obtain some information in regard to the wretch, and the idea of making the injured husband her auxiliary had already occurred to Camille.

"I pity you with all my heart, and I will gladly aid you in discovering the culprits—for I suppose you are not going to leave them in peace. I, too, have an account to settle with Zig-Zag, you recollect."

"Yes," growled the clown, "it may be that he did kill your father, for he is capable of anything. Nothing would please me better than to see him mount the steps of the guillotine. But magistrates are such fools. They have let him go once, and they will let him go again, even if I should succeed in finding him, and I shall have no such good luck."

"You can search for him, however."

"And how shall we live in the meantime? My boy can not live upon air, nor can I, for that matter. Our employer has shut up shop. He is in debt to everybody.

The building and the scenery and the costumes have all been attached, and I must try to secure another engagement for Georget and myself, but this will be a hard thing to do, for the fair closes day after to-morrow."

"What is your name?" Camille asked, suddenly.

"Jean Courapied, aged forty-five, born on the road between Paris and Amiens."

"Are you anxious to continue in your present business?"

"I don't know any other way to earn my living. My father was a juggler, and my mother a circus rider, so you see I am a child of the ring."

"But if you and your son were sure of a comfortable and much less laborious existence, what then?"

"I should jump at the chance, especially if I could send the little chap to school. But unfortunately I have not yet discovered any wealthy person anxious to adopt me."

"I will pay you good wages if you will consent to serve me, and provide for your son besides."

"You, my little lady! Your proposal suits me to a T, but what am I to do? I'm only a clown, and I have no right to be too particular; and yet if I should be asked to commit any piece of rascality, I should refuse, if only on Georget's account."

"I hope so, indeed. If I had not taken you for an honest man, I should not have spoken to you."

"Then what do you want me to do?"

"Can you not guess? My father has been murdered, and I have sworn to avenge him. The authorities have allowed his assassin to escape. I caught only a glimpse of him, but you know him—"

"Zig-Zag, you mean? I should think I did know him! We have been traveling together eighteen months. But how do you know that it was he who—"

"I am certain of it. After the crime, I pursued him, and saw him enter this building by the back door."

"It is true that he did have a key to it, but he declared upon oath that he did not leave the building during the performance. I knew he was lying, but I thought that he merely went out to take a drink, so I didn't want to get him into trouble. Ah! if I had suspected that he was going to steal Amanda from me!"

"Do you accept my offer?"

"Certainly, certainly; but I can not promise to catch him. He is terribly sharp, and if he has all that money in his possession, he will lose no time in gettting out of Paris."

"Listen to me," interrupted Camille. "I am rich, and I shall spare no expense to find him. You and your child must begin by changing your costumes. You must be respectably clad, and in such a style that people will take you for a countryman who has just arrived from the provinces with his son. You must then hire rooms in some modest hotel, and take up your abode there with a respectable amount of baggage. You had better purchase your clothing and your trunks to-day. I reside near here, in a house that I will point out to you, but it would be better for you to select a part of the town in which you will be less likely to be recognized. You must come and see me as soon as you are installed in your new quarters, and you can then begin your search without a moment's delay. I will defray all these expenses, of course, and will pay you three hundred francs a month for your services, until we have succeeded in our task. Afterward I will obtain a situation for you, and place your son in a school where they will make a man of him.

Courapied was weeping, but this time it was with joy.

"Ah, madame," he began in a broken voice, "I—"

"Call me mademoiselle," interrupted Camille. "I am not married, and as my father is dead, I am sole mistress of my actions, nor is there any one to call me to account for the use I make of my money. Now what I desire of you is, first: Information in regard to this scoundrel. What is his real name?"

"I never learned. Amanda knows, perhaps; and yet, I don't believe that he ever confided it to her."

"But he must have told some of his comrades."

"He had no comrades. He was not one of us—or, rather, he adopted the profession only from necessity—and he must have followed several others before he turned acrobat."

"How did he happen to become a member of your company?"

"It was by the merest chance. Early last year we took a trip through the South, and our head gymnast fled into

Spain without so much as saying, by your leave. The manager tried to find some one to take his place, but couldn't. One evening, while we were encamped in a field on the edge of a strip of woods, a tall, strapping fellow, dressed like a gentleman, in a suit of black—only it was a terribly battered and threadbare suit—came out of the woods. What was he doing there? Probably lying in wait for some passer-by, to rob him. This did not prevent him from offering us his services, however. Our manager laughed in his face. But what did the fellow do but throw off his coat, slip his hands under his waistband and then perform his wonderful feat, right there on the turf, without the slightest preparation. One would have sworn that he was born in the sawdust, our expression for in a circus. But no, not at all. He was only an amateur, the child of highly respectable and influential parents, a gentleman's son."

"A gentleman's son!" repeated Mlle. Monistrol, in great surprise.

"Yes," said Courapied, nodding his head. "He told the manager that he had got into a scrape, that his father had cut off his allowance, and that he would like to try a roving life awhile. It was all a parcel of lies, I am sure, but that made no difference, for there were not three gymnasts in France that could do what he had done; so our manager engaged him, and he never had cause to repent of it, for Zig-Zag brought him in more money than all the rest of us put together."

"And did you never discover who he really was during all the months that he spent with the troupe? Did no one ever recognize him?"

"There was no danger of that, for he never appeared before an audience unmasked."

"But you must have seen his face."

"Of course; and I must admit that he had just the face to please a woman. Besides he had what they call a distinguished air. But I never could bear the sight of him, with his dull, white complexion and his greenish gray eyes—regular cat eyes. No one liked him, at least no one but that good-for-nothing hussy Amanda, and even she concealed her fondness for him. She even quarreled with him sometimes, and I really thought she hated him. But I understand now. It was only because she was

jealous when he made eyes at the ladies who applauded him."

"Still, they could see only the lower part of his face."

"That was enough. He has splendid teeth, and he is well built—tall and slender as a reed, lithe as an eel and as strong as Sampson. He had a bout with our Hercules, and threw him without the slightest difficulty."

"That is not astonishing with hands like his."

"Yes, they never let go their hold of what they once seize upon."

"Why does he always conceal them on the stage?"

"Oh, that is a part of the performance. Besides our fine gentleman is afraid of spoiling them. Would you believe it? he always wears gloves when he takes a walk?"

Camille was satisfied now, and she deemed it unnecessary to make any further inquiries in regard to the shape and dimensions of Zig-Zag's hands.

"Where do you suppose he went after leaving here?" she inquired.

"The deuce take me if I have the slightest idea!"

"Do you think he has joined some other troupe?"

"He is no such fool! All the troupes visit the same fairs. We should be sure to meet him at Neuilly or at Saint-Cloud, and he has no desire to encounter our manager or me. Besides, Amanda has got very tired of the business."

"Then what can have become of them? Have they left the country?"

"No; Amanda is too fond of Paris. I have an idea that they will both try to gain an entrance into fashionable society, that is, if they have got money enough to hold their own after they get there. How much did he steal from you?"

"Twenty thousand francs."

"That is twenty times more than he needs to enable him to change his skin. It would not surprise me if they have taken refuge in furnished rooms in the neighborhood of Clichy or on the Route de la Révolte. Amanda knows plenty of good places. You see they will want to conceal themselves until they can get a new outfit, and they'll have no difficulty in procuring it in that neighborhood, of little Father Rigolo. He can dress a man from head to foot for you in less than a quarter of an hour."

"Very well, we will search for Zig-Zag wherever you think best."

"You, mademoiselle! Oh, no, you must not think of such a thing. It's as much as I dare to attempt myself. And I sha'n't take Georget with me, you may rest assured of that. But talk of the devil—you know the saying. Here's the little chap now."

Camille turned and perceived the boy, who was really a very handsome little fellow, with his rosy cheeks, fair curly hair, and large blue eyes. He was evidently greatly surprised to see this fine lady talking with his father, and though he eyed her admiringly, he did not venture to approach.

Camille smiled upon him encouragingly, and Courapied called out:

"Don't be afraid, little chap. Come here. What have you got?"

"Your breakfast, father," replied Georget, timidly. "I have picked up all the scraps I could find around the ginger-bread booths, and I must have at least two pounds of them."

"There, isn't he a sharp little chap?" proudly exclaimed the father, dashing away a tear. "He knew I was hungry, and went off, without saying a word, to find something for me. Gingerbread is not a very satisfactory diet, especially when it has been trampled in the dust, but it keeps one alive all the same, don't it, Georget?"

Touched by this abject poverty, Camille took the little fellow by the hand and kissed him.

He made no resistance, but he dared not lift his eyes to hers, though he was not naturally timid. He took part in the performance every evening with remarkable assurance, but he was not accustomed to being caressed by a well-dressed lady.

"Do you know how to read?" inquired Mlle. Monistrol.

"Yes, madame, and how to write, too."

"You have been to school, then?"

"No, madame, it was my mother who taught me."

"That is true," interposed Courapied. "My poor wife was much better educated than I am."

"Ah, well," said Camille, kindly, "I will take your mother's place. You loved her, did you not?"

"Yes, madame, and I am sure that I shall love you, too."

For the little fellow was already reassured, and now stood gazing at the handsome young lady in evident admiration.

"I am going to send you and your father to a comfortable place, where you will both be well treated, well lodged, and well fed," added Camille.

"But what are we to do in return for all this?"

"Assist me in finding a man who has injured us both deeply—a man and a woman."

"Zig-Zag and—I know."

The care with which he avoided uttering Amanda's name in his father's presence convinced Camille that this child, with his evidently precocious mind, would prove a valuable auxiliary.

"It won't be any easy matter," continued the boy. "Ah, if they had left Vigoureux here! But they took good care not to do that."

"Vigoureux?" questioned Camille.

"Yes; Zig-Zag's dog. He would find his master for us."

Georget had scarcely uttered these words when an enormous dog dashed by the child, grazing his legs, and nearly throwing him down.

"There's the dog now!" exclaimed Courapied. "Zig-Zag can not be far off."

Camille, pale with excitement, glanced around for the acrobat, but saw no sign of him.

The dog, without pausing, rushed to the building, went straight to a place where the boards did not quite reach the ground, dug away the earth with his huge paws to enlarge this opening, and then forced his way through it.

"Quick, Georget; a rope and a strap!" cried Courapied.

The boy did not ask his father what he wanted of these articles; he understood at once, and running to the horses that were grazing near by, he took a knife from his pocket, severed the rope that bound them, slipped off one of the halters, and immediately stationed himself, on his knees, by the hole through which the dog had gained admission to the building.

Mlle. Monistrol watched these proceedings in silent astonishment, for she did not understand the object of these

strange orders. In response to her inquiring look, the clown said, rubbing his hands complacently:

"We are in luck."

"How so?" stammered Camille.

"Vigoureux will take us to Zig-Zag."

"What! that formidable looking bull-dog?"

"Yes. He hasn't his equal for following a scent. If he was taken ten leagues, he would have no difficulty in finding his way home. The fact that he has come straight here from the other end of Paris is sufficient proof of that."

"But if he loves his master so much he would not leave him."

"Don't you believe that, mademoiselle. He has been trained to do errands. Every morning Zig-Zag used to send him to the butcher's with a basket, and some money in the basket. As soon as he was waited on, he let the butcher take the money, but not before, and he would then bring the meat back without touching it. It was that hussy, Amanda, who taught him."

"And what of it?" inquired Camille, who was still in the dark.

"Why, I shouldn't be afraid to bet you anything you like that Zig-Zag has left something—something that he is anxious to get hold of—and that he has sent the dog for it."

"Father," whispered Georget, "I hear him. He is tearing up the floor with his teeth and paws."

"Because what he was sent for is concealed under the floor, probably. Let him alone. He will make his appearance with it presently. That will be the time to catch him. Keep your eyes open, little one."

The warning was superfluous, for crouching close to the building, like a terrier watching for a rat, the child waited, ready to slip the halter around the mouth of the beast, at the imminent risk of having his fingers snapped off in the attempt.

Mlle. Monistrol, more and more astonished, was on the point of questioning him further, but Courapied motioned her to be silent. The decisive moment was fast approaching, and it would not do to frighten Vigoureux; for in that case he might make his escape at the other end of the building.

But Vigoureux did not seem to consider any such ruse necessary, for his thick nose soon appeared at the edge of the hole. But he had no little difficulty in getting it through, for he held between his teeth a long narrow box.

"See! what did I tell you?" exclaimed Courapied. "Isn't he a knowing beast? Look out, Georget; now's your time. Take care not to let him bite you."

Georget performed his rather difficult task with no little skill. He dexterously slipped the halter around the dog's jaws, gave it three or four quick twists, and then buckled it firmly. The whole thing was done in the twinkling of an eye.

Vigoureux would gladly have used his teeth; but to bite, he would have been obliged to drop the box, and he was faithful to his trust.

When he found himself thus muzzled he tried to retreat under the building, but Georget had his rope ready, and without losing a second, he slipped it through the ring in the collar the dog wore about his neck, and began to pull with all his might.

Vigoureux began to pull in the opposite direction, and he was much stronger than this twelve-year-old boy, so the father sprung to his aid.

They soon succeeded in pulling out the enormous animal, who instantly rushed upon Georget, and felled him to the ground, but the hastily improvised muzzle prevented him from defending himself in an effective manner, and also from dropping his master's box.

"Now, mademoiselle, we have our man," remarked Courapied with a triumphant air, "or at least, we can have him whenever we like. With a guide like this, I am sure of finding Zig-Zag, and I shall start out in pursuit of him this very evening."

"I should like to know the contents of the box," murmured Camille.

"I don't believe there is any money in it," was the reply. "When Zig-Zag has any of that he makes it fly, and it is not likely that he left what he stole from your father here. See, every time Vigoureux shakes the box, there is a rattling like that of old iron, but no ring of coin."

"The money Zig-Zag took was in bank-notes."

"The deuce of it is that there is no way of opening the

box, or even of getting hold of it," remarked Courapied. "Vigoreux can not open his jaws, and if I unmuzzle him he will tear us to pieces. But what shall I do with him until night?"

"Take him to my house," replied Camille. "I live alone with my old nurse a few steps from here. You can accompany me home, fasten the dog in the wood-shed, and then leave your son with me while you go and purchase clothing for yourself and him. Come, we have no time to lose."

"I hope we sha'n't have to drag the beast along. See, he is pulling in the direction of the Boulevard Voltaire."

"That is the very direction in which we are going."

"So much the better. Come along, Georget, you will not have to go hungry any more. Thank the lady, and serve her faithfully, for if she had not offered us a helping hand there would have been nothing left for us but to drown ourselves."

"I would go through fire and water for her," replied the child, with tears in his eyes.

CHAPTER III.

EASTER came very late that year. The fair was still in progress, and the concert halls in the Champs-Elysées were beginning to open. In Paris this last is a sure sign that spring has indeed come. Those who make it the business of their lives to enjoy themselves, are not obliged to consult the calendar before changing their amusements; and instead of shutting themselves up in theaters, they gladly avail themselves of the opportunity to go where they are sure to find ladies in light spring toilets, and where they can dine to the sound of sweet music.

At least Julien Gémozac and Alfred de Fresnay did so on the evening of the day Camille Monistrol first presented herself at the house of her father's partner.

Julien had not yet quite forgiven his friend for the shabby trick he had played upon him by deserting him after their adventure near the Barrière du Trône.

Still, they had met, as usual, at the club, between the hours of five and seven, and a successful game of cards having put them both in good humor, they had mutually

agreed to spend the evening at the Café des Ambassadeurs.

They found the *élite* of Parisian society assemhled there, and deemed themselves fortunate in securing one of the best tables, one near the middle of the restaurant, and close to the balustrade. They had come to enjoy themselves, and they did enjoy themselves, though the two were not in the same mood by any means.

Fresnay, in the wildest of spirits, exchanged smiling salutations and jokes with his numerous acquaintances, and ridiculed the singers, though all this did not prevent him from eating and drinking enough for four.

Julien, being less exuberant in his nature, found his enjoyment in thinking of a host of things in no way connected with the gay scene around him. He was beginning to find that even the most luxurious existence becomes monotonous when it is aimless.

He recollected, too, that he was nearing his thirtieth year, and that domestic life has its charms.

He was thinking, above all, of Camille Monistrol, the beautiful and thoughtful girl whom he had seen that morning, and who was such a striking contrast to the gay butterflies around him; and he asked himself if he would not do well to enter the ranks of staid and respectable family men without delay.

To do this, he had only to adopt the course which Mlle. Monistrol had indicated, and which had many charms for him by reason of its very difficulties. To seek adventures and brave dangers to win the hand of a lovely and noble girl was more pleasant and more novel than to allow himself to be quietly married to some rich heiress by his parents.

These sage reflections were at last interrupted by Fresnay who, annoyed by his companion's taciturnity, exclaimed:

"What is the matter with you? You are as stupid as an owl. This is our third bottle of champagne, and you haven't opened your lips except to drink. By the time I began the second, I was as gay as a lark; and now I begin to feel like committing any act of folly.

"I don't," replied Julien, laconically.

"Will you bet me a hundred francs that I don't dare to mount the platform and sing a love song?"

"You are quite capable of it, but you would be taken to the station-house; and I should let you go, if only to pay you for treating me as you did the other night."

"What! are you still angry with me about that? Why, you ought to thank me. I left you alone with a young lady you evidently admired very much."

"And with a murdered man."

"My dear, I had invited two very charming young ladies to supper, and—"

"Oh, hush! You will never be anything but an idler and scapegrace."

"So you think I have no romance in my soul. You are very much mistaken, my dear fellow. On the contrary, I am longing for all sorts of chivalrous adventures. Yes, I, Alfred de Fresnay, a nobleman by birth, and a skeptic by profession, dream of an ideal. The only trouble is that I can not find her. Still, there are times when I feel a wild desire to sacrifice myself for a woman. Show me one that is worth the trouble, and I will declare myself ready to defend her against the whole world. You shrug your shoulders, and evidently think I am jesting. That is because you do not know me. I have romantic tendencies —so much the worse for you if you have not discovered them—latent tendencies—"

"That appear only when you are drunk."

"And when I have won at baccarat. But you have only to put me to the test."

"Look! there is your ideal now," replied Gémozac, who was becoming tired of all this nonsense.

"What! that lady who just came in? Well, I can't contradict you. She certainly is a superb creature, and her style of beauty is wonderfully unique."

The ideal referred to was a tall, magnificently formed woman, utterly unlike those of her own sex, by whom she was surrounded. They—whether blondes or brunettes—were all formed on the same model, and attired in the same fashion, while the new-comer wore a showy costume to which no fashionable modiste would have pleaded guilty, and which must have been devised expressly to attract notice. Her hair was of a rich chestnut hue, over which painters of the sixteenth century went wild; her eyes sparkled like two black diamonds, and with her broad-brimmed hat, loaded with long curling plumes, she

looked like a Velasquez that had just stepped out of her frame.

Her entrance had evidently caused a sensation. Some smiled sneeringly, others giggled. The new-comer was evidently a stranger, though she could hardly be a *débutante*, as she did not seem at all timid, but stood surveying the crowd rather scornfully, jostled every now and then by the waiters, who were flying back and forth from the restaurant to the terrace.

Fresnay did not neglect this opportunity to convince his friend that daring adventures had no terrors for him, for he rose, walked straight up to the lady, and said, without any preamble whatever:

"You are looking for a seat, madame. There is one at our table."

"No, I am looking for a friend," she remarked coldly.

"A friend who has failed to keep his appointment, as he is not here. Dine with us."

"I have dined, but I should like a seat."

Fresnay gallantly offered the fair stranger his arm, and conducted her to the chair which he had just vacated, and which she took possession of without any urging.

Gémozac would gladly have dispensed with the society his companion had forced upon him, and yet his curiosity was aroused.

"Where have I seen this face?" he said to himself.

But closely as he examined the features of this chestnut-haired beauty, he was unable to recall the circumstances under which he had seen her before. Perhaps he was even deceived by some chance resemblance.

Fresnay, elated by his discovery, already began to assume a complacent air. The strange lady did not seem to notice this, however. In fact, she did not even appear conscious that she was sitting at table with two gentlemen who were well worthy of any woman's notice. On the contrary, she seemed to be entirely engrossed by the gay scene around her. Indeed it absorbed her to such an extent that she was wholly oblivious of her neighbor's admiring glances.

"Confess that you came to see Chaillié, the little hunchback," said Fresnay. "All the ladies are raving about him."

"I never even heard of him," replied the stranger, disdainfully.

"Then this must be your first visit to the Café des Ambassadeurs?"

"Yes. What are those girls sitting there on the stage for? Are they going to sing?"

"No. They are simply *figurantes.*"

"Why are they dressed, one in blue, another in red, another in yellow, and another in green? They look like so many parrots."

"Madame has hit it exactly. Madame is probably a dramatic or perhaps a lyric artist?"

"Nothing of the kind. A foreigner."

"That does not surprise me. French women do not have eyes and hair like yours. You must be a Spaniard."

"No, a Hungarian."

"Your nationality will not prevent you from accepting a glass of champagne, perhaps?"

"I should like it very much, for I am thirsty."

Fresnay hastened to fill a champagne glass.

"No," interposed the lady, "not in that. I would rather have a cup."

"I will ask the waiter to bring one."

"No, it isn't worth the trouble. This will do."

And taking the proffered glass, she emptied it at a single draught.

Interested in spite of himself in this original stranger, Julien tried harder than ever to recollect where he had met her, but being unsuccessful, he finally ventured on this question:

"May I ask, madame, how long have you been in Paris? I have never been in Hungary, and yet I can not help fancying that your face is not unknown to me."

"That is quite possible. I arrived in Paris only last week, but I have been almost everywhere already, for I want to see everything that is to be seen."

"Have you been doing Paris alone?" inquired Fresnay, eagerly.

"Yes, sir. I can dispense with a protector, for I am not afraid of anything or anybody."

"Then you are not married?"

"I want no husband."

"What am I to understand from that?"

"That I wish to do as I please; and jus now it pleases me to visit every nook and corner of this strange city. It is not in monuments and works of art that I am most interested. I want to see the Paris I have read so much about in French novels—the drinking saloons, the gambling dens, the—"

"And so you began the evening with a concert *café*. That is right, madame. But there are many places of greater interest, and if you will accept me as a guide, I can truthfully assure you that you could not find a better one."

"Thanks; but I have one already."

"Oh, yes, an interpreter furnished by the hotel at which you are stopping. He will take you to the mint, the markets and the slaughter-houses, while an old Parisian like myself could show you places that strangers never see."

"You are mistaken, sir. My guide is no hireling, but one of my compatriots, who has resided in this country nearly ten years, and who was a friend of my father's. He has placed himself at my disposal, and we go out sight-seeing together almost every day. I expected to find him here this evening. He told me he should dine here."

"And he has failed to keep his word. That is unpardonable in him, but I will do my best to take his place. Where would you like to go, after the concert is over? Speak, do not hesitate. Would you like to see Father Lunette's saloon, 'The City of the Sun,' commonly known as Little Mazas? Or would you prefer to sup at the 'Squirrel's Grave?' the rag-picker's favorite haunt."

"These places must be very interesting, but it is my ambition to witness the pursuit of a criminal or an assassin—such an one as I have read of in Gaboriau's novels."

"The woman must be mad," thought Julien.

"I can readily understand such a desire on your part," replied the imperturbable Fresnay. "But, unfortunately, there is no particular day appointed for such expeditions. Besides you, who seem to be so familiar with our language, must know the proverb: 'To make hare soup, you must have, first, a hare,' and assassins, fortunately, are even more rare than hares."

"One would not think so from the newspapers. There is hardly a day in which mention is not made of some

new crime. Why, the very day after my arrival, all Paris was talking of a murder on the Boulevard—I forget the name. Oh, the Boulevard Voltaire."

"Yes, that murder was of quite recent occurrence, and a very strange affair it was, too."

Julien gave Fresnay a warning kick under the table; but the latter, ignoring it entirely, continued:

"And I shall doubtless surprise you very much, my dear madame, when I tell you that I and my friend here were both mixed up in the affair."

"You, sir?" exclaimed the lady, with a questioning glance at Gémozac, who felt a strong desire to pommel his companion.

Fresnay answered for him, however.

"Yes," he cried, "my friend, Julian Gémozac, whom I have the honor to introduce to you, first discovered the body. By the merest chance we happened to be near the scene of the crime. But the strangest thing of all is that Julien is well acquainted with the murdered man's daughter."

"True, the papers did state that he had a daughter," murmured the stranger.

"And a very pretty girl she is, too, and young," added Alfred.

"Ah! how I pity her. I know what is to be left an orphan just as one is entering life. I was sixteen when I lost my father, but I came into possession of a large fortune at his death, while this poor child probably finds herself reduced to poverty."

"You can cease to trouble yourself on that point, my dear madame."

"Indeed?" exclaimed the stranger, with an eagerness that surprised Gémozac not a little.

"Yes," replied Fresnay, "she will be very rich, though her father hadn't a penny. It seems that he invented some improvement to be applied to steam engines, and that the invention is going to yield his daughter an enormous amount of money. Julien here can explain all this to you much better than I can, for his father was associated with the murdered man in the enterprise, and consequently is now in partnership with the daughter."

"Will you never have done talking about this uninteresting matter?" exclaimed Julien, now thoroughly ex-

asperated with his half-intoxicated companion who seemed to take a sly pleasure in these indiscreet disclosures.

"Pardon me, sir," said the stranger, gently. "I have offended you, though unintentionally, I assure you, by questioning your friend about a person in whom you seem to take an interest. I regret it exceedingly. I also did very wrong to seat myself at your table, for you must have a very poor opinion of me. It is all the fault of my training, and of the education I received, however. I have always been in the habit of acting without the slightest constraint, and without stopping to consider the apparent significance of my words and actions. But I beg that you will not mistake me for an adventuress. I am the widow of the Count de Lugos, and I am staying at the Grand Hotel until I can find more suitable quarters. If you will call and see me; I think you will change your opinion in regard to me, and I will present you to my compatriot, Monsieur Tergowitz, whom I expected to meet here this evening."

"Can it be that you are going to close your doors against me?" cried Fresnay.

"No, sir, though I trust that you are going to be so kind as to tell me your name."

"I presented my friend Gémozac, but as he does not seem inclined to return the favor, I shall be compelled to introduce myself. Alfred, Baron de Fresnay, at your service, madame; twenty-nine years of age, an orphan, likewise a bachelor, and a landed proprietor in Anjou. Julien and myself represent respectively the aristocracy and the *tiers-état*, but I would gladly exchange the revenues of my barony for Father Gémozac's millions, which will descend to his only son some day or other."

"It is enough for me to know that I have to deal with two gentlemen. I should be charmed to see you again, gentlemen, but I doubt if you will retain any recollection of this chance meeting."

"I will convince you to the contrary, and soon," protested Fresnay, who was becoming more and more infatuated with the chestnut-haired beauty.

Julien said not a word. He did not believe the assertions of this beautiful stranger, who impressed him as being a mere *intrigante*. In fact, he was even beginning to suspect that she had her reasons for endeavoring to be-

come acquainted with them, and he secretly anathematized Alfred for his imprudence.

"But is the performance over?" asked the stranger suddenly. "The gayly dressed damsels have disappeared, and the stage is empty."

"They will return by and by, after a performance on the trapeze, which is not likely to interest you much."

"Pardon me, I enjoy the feats of gymnasts exceedingly, and am very anxious to see if these excel ours in skill.

"Gymnasts," repeated Gémozac, mentally, "she uses the right word, and speaks French very correctly. Where can she have come from? She will never make me believe that she is really a woman of rank. She is some *ci-devant* governess, probably, as that fool of an Alfred will find out, doubtless, without my having to trouble myself about the matter."

Alfred continued to drink champagne, while the strange countess sat watching, with marked attention, the performance of two artists in flesh-colored tights who were executing extraordinary feats on the horizontal bar. She was a judge, unquestionably, for she soon greeted a successful leap with an approving nod of the head, and the next minute made a contemptuous grimace when she noted the rather clumsy execution of a much less difficult feat.

The chair the gallant Fresnay had relinquished to her was close to the balustrade, and the lady whose attention seemed to be so irresistibly attracted by this interesting performance finally turned and leaned both elbows on the wooden railing, without troubling herself about the two young men sitting at the table with her. Julien could see only her profile, and Alfred was even less fortunate, for she had turned her back upon him.

The diners of both sexes that thronged the terrace paid no attention to this ill-assorted trio, so the two friends exchanged signs which the Hungarian, seated as she was, could not see.

"Let us decamp as soon as possible," said Julien in pantomime. "I don't want to be bored with this woman all the evening."

"I like her," responded Alfred, in the same way. "Go, if you like, but I shall remain and see the end of the adventure."

So no one moved, though Julien, in his secret heart, was fuming violently. He would have been glad to make his escape; but he felt sure that if he rose to do so, Alfred would protest, and insist upon knowing his reason for this hasty departure.

While he reluctantly sat there, facing the balustrade, like the stranger, Julien suddenly noticed, in the crowd below, a gentleman who stood gazing up at the terrace as if looking for some one among the diners.

This gentleman was young, good-looking, well-dressed, and well-gloved; so it was not at all surprising that he should be eying the pretty girls seated at the tables above him; but Julien soon perceived that his attention was bestowed exclusively upon the pretended countess, and that he must know her, for he made a gesture which could be addressed only to her, and which seemed to signify: "Very well. I understand. All right."

Julien had seen only the close of the pantomime, but the discovery increased his distrust.

"Farewell, acrobats!" exclaimed Fresnay. "They have finished at last. Now we shall have some more singing. Is Madame la Comtesse anxious to hear more shrill sopranos and superannuated tenors?"

"By no means," replied the lady. "My friend does not make his appearance, and it is useless for me to wait for him, for I begin to think he has forgotten his appointment."

"Very fortunately, I am at hand to serve you, my dear madame, and I promise to show you a novel sight if you will trust yourself to my guidance."

"I shall not refuse if your friend will consent to be of the party."

"Pray do not count upon me," replied Julien, hastily.

"Yes, you must come," remarked Fresnay, "for I am going to take you to a place where you will stand a very good chance of meeting Monsieur Monistrol's assassin, and you know you promised Mademoiselle Monistrol to assist her in finding the scoundrel."

"Who is Mademoiselle Monistrol?" inquired the so-called Countess de Lugos.

"The daughter of the inventor I was speaking of just now. I have seen her but once, and I am by no means sure that I should know her, but my friend Gémozac is

destined to see a good deal of her, and he is in love with her already."

"Pray hold your tongue," interrupted Julien.

"Do not be ashamed of a sentiment that certainly does you honor, sir," remarked the noble foreigner. "This young girl is alone in the world, I believe, and it is only natural that you should become her champion; and if she really thinks of avenging her father—"

"She thinks of nothing else," exclaimed Fresnay.

And as Julien turned sternly upon him to silence him, the incorrigible talker added:

"You told me so yourself. You also told me that she has sworn to marry the man who ferrets out the assassin, and it is no mean prize, this hand of Mademoiselle Monistrol, as her father's invention will yield her millions. I should, perhaps, have entered the field myself, but the lady has a sort of grudge against me; besides, I can employ my time better."

As he spoke, he bestowed an ardent glance upon the beautiful Hungarian, who responded by an encouraging smile.

Just at this moment a waiter approached the table, and asked:

"Shall I give madame a card that a gentleman requested me to deliver to the Countess de Lugos?"

"Yes," replied the stranger, reaching out her hand for the card.

She had no sooner glanced at the name inscribed upon it than she exclaimed:

"I knew that Monsieur Tergowitz would not disappoint me. He is here; he has seen me and requests my permission to join me."

Then turning to the waiter, she said:

"Tell the gentleman I am coming."

"What! you are going to leave us?" replied Fresnay.

"To my very great regret, sir; but I have an engagement with the gentleman, as I remarked before."

"Introduce us to him, and let all four of us finish the evening together."

"That would be delightful, but I think it would be better to defer the presentation until some future time, and until I have had the pleasure of receiving a call from you."

"Is your compatriot also stopping at the Grand Hotel?" asked Fresnay.

"No; but I am alone, and time often hangs heavy on my hands. Monsieur Tergowitz knows it, and comes almost every day to keep me company."

"So *au revoir*, gentlemen—or farewell," the stranger added, rising with such a deliberate and determined air that Fresnay stood aside to let her pass, and made no further attempt to detain her.

Gémozac scarcely waited for her to get out of hearing before he gave vent to his indignation.

"Are you determined to anger me beyond endurance?" he exclaimed hotly.

"What do you mean?" retorted Alfred, coldly. "Are you angry because I tried to ingratiate myself into the favor of a very pretty woman?—for she is pretty, you can not deny it."

"Make love to her as much as you like, that is nothing to me; but don't tell her my affairs or those of my friends, if you please," was the angry response.

"So you are offended because I spoke of you and Mademoiselle Monistrol. What's the harm, pray? She doesn't know you, and it is not likely that she will ever meet the young lady in whom you are so deeply interested. The countess came to Paris to enjoy herself, and not to meddle with matters that do not concern her."

"Then you think she is a genuine countess? You really are inconceivably stupid."

"Not so stupid as you may suppose, perhaps. I care very little about her noble origin, but I think her a very charming person, and I am looking forward to a very agreeable acquaintance."

"Take care that she does not lead you further than you want to go. In my opinion, this pretended countess is an adventuress of the worst kind; and her friend, Monsieur Tergowitz, is probably no better than she is. I saw him making signs to her, and I have no doubt that they understand each other perfectly. You'll get yourself into a pretty mess if you pursue the acquaintance any further. Still, it makes no difference to me. Put your head into the noose if you like, but never mention my name again before these people."

"Nor that of Mademoiselle Monistrol. Very well. It

is more than likely that the countess has forgotten both names by this time, however; and it is quite certain that she never expects to see you again, for you said nothing but disagreeable things to her all the while she was with us."

"I didn't say half as many disagreeable things to her as I wanted to. I dislike the woman as much as you seem to like her, and that is saying a good deal. I have a presentiment that she is going to cause me trouble."

"How can she possibly harm you? You have evidently decided not to call upon her, so it is not at all probable that you will ever see her again. Besides, what possible object could she have in doing you an injury? You were not very polite to her; still, that is no reason why she should declare war upon you."

"What if I should tell you that I am almost certain I have seen her somewhere else, and in an entirely different costume? Nor can I get it out of my head that she came here expressly to enter into conversation with us, and to induce us to tell her things she is interested in knowing. In that case you served her well, for you gave her any quantity of information that she did not even ask for."

"Only in regard to Mademoiselle Monistrol. You have mounted your hobby again, I see."

"Try at least to atone for your folly by helping me to discover with whom we have had to deal. It will be an easy matter for you to obtain some clew when you call on her, for she must have a maid, and a louis or two will induce her to tell you all you want to know about her mistress."

"So now you want me to play the spy! Such a rôle does not suit me at all; still, if only to cure you of your prejudice against this poor countess— There, I see her now! She is talking with a gentleman over yonder in the corner."

"Yes, with the same gentleman who was making signs to her a few moments ago. I recognize him perfectly."

"It is the Hungarian nobleman, of course."

"He is neither a Hungarian nor a nobleman, I can vouch for that."

"He is very good-looking, at all events. They seem to be carrying on a very animated conversation. See, they

have seated themselves, side by side, in two arm-chairs. It is a pity we can not hear what they are saying. You would know what to think—and so would I."

There was more truth in Fresnay's words than he supposed, for the conversation between the foreigner and her escort would have removed all doubts in regard to their character and relations.

"We had better not remain here," said the man. "They can see us from up there."

"I know it," his companion replied, "but I told them I was going to join you. If we should leave immediately, it would look very much as if we were running away. To play my rôle well, I must remain quietly talking with you."

"Then the bate took. What did you tell them?"

"That I am the Countess de Lugos—that I came to Paris to amuse myself, and that I have no acquaintance in the city except a compatriot, a Hungarian nobleman by the name of Tergowitz. You, of course, are Tergowitz.

"And they swallowed the yarn?"

"They pretended to swallow it, and that is all I care about for the present."

"They did not recognize you, then?"

"No; I am sure of that."

"Good! Now which is which?"

"The short one is Alfred de Fresnay. He is a baron, and seems to think only of enjoying himself. He took a great fancy to me, evidently, and I am certain to see him again—and soon. He is not dangerous, but I am afraid of the other—the tall light-complexioned one. He did not say much, but he never once took his eyes off me."

"Did you find out his name?"

"I took good care to do that, and I can give you full particulars in regard to him. He is Julien Gémozac, the son of Monsieur Gémozac."

"The Gémozac who owns a factory on the Quai de Jemmapes? He must be worth his millions, then."

"Yes, and what is more, he was the partner of the girl's father. Well, this young man happened to be at the fair on the very evening of the murder. But the strangest thing about it all is that the Monistrol girl is rich. Her father invented something or other, and the invention is going to yield a great deal of money."

"That is something worth knowing."

"Wait, I have not finished. The fair maiden has sworn to avenge her father, and offers her hand as a reward for the person who discovers the perpetrator of the crime. And Julien Gémozac is determined to win the prize; so we are warned."

"I am not afraid of them."

"Nor am I. They will be no more dangerous than the judge of instruction, probably. But there is that brute Courapied. He will be sure to recognize us if he meets us, and you may rest assured that he will keep a sharp lookout for us. Perhaps it would be well for us to spend two or three months in England."

"Nonsense! That would only be a waste of money, while we are sure of success if we remain in Paris. You remember the programme, don't you?"

"Perfectly. Each of us is to work on his own hook, and we are to share the profits. You told them that you were staying at the Grand Hotel, didn't you?"

"Yes, and I am almost certain that Fresnay will pay me a visit to-morrow."

"Then you must take up your quarters there to-morrow morning with your maid and baggage. The trunks are waiting for you at the Western Railway Station, where I deposited them in your name. You will only have to call for them, and this evening I will bring you your maid. You know her, however."

"Olga, I suppose you mean. She is a sharp one, and if she can be trusted—"

"I feel as sure of her as I do of you. Besides, she is at my mercy. If she attempts to rebel, I have the means of sending her to the penitentiary for a year. I don't feel inclined to assume this character of a Hungarian nobleman that you have invented for me. I should only be in your way, and it would be better for me not to figure in the comedy you are going to play. I shall take up my abode somewhere else, and not under the name of Tergowitz, I think."

"As you please, provided I see you every day."

"Very well; we can meet in our cottage on the Plaine Saint-Denis, unless something happens to prevent. But everywhere else we must pretend to be strangers to each other."

"But those idiots dining up there have seen me with you."

"I shall try to keep out of their way in future. Besides, I don't intend that you shall go too far with that swell you have just captivated. You are to receive him, and let him make love to you, but merely in order to keep posted in regard to every movement of his friend, Gémozac, who is probably going to turn detective merely to please the girl. I will attend to her."

"Very well; but no foolishness, my dear. If you think of entering the field as a rival of Gémozac's, you'll be sorry for it. I shouldn't hesitate to denounce you in that case. I've no intention of playing second fiddle, I haven't."

"You need have no fears of that. We are bound together, and when we have retired from business, with our fortune made, we will go abroad, and marry. But see, the gentlemen are leaving the table, and they are quite capable of coming down to take a look at me. It is time for us to go. It is the last night we shall have to spend at the Grange-Rouge, but you know I must go there after Vigoureux. He must have returned some time ago, and we shall probably find him asleep on the box I sent him for."

"You had much better have left the box where it was. Vigoureux is a very clever dog, but some one might have followed him."

"Who? The old barracks is empty now; besides, I had no desire to leave the contents of my box for the first person who happened along. Our forgetting it in our hasty flight has caused me worry enough already. When I get hold of it again, I shall feel more easy in mind."

The estimable couple left the garden by the door opening on the Place de la Concorde just as Alfred and Julien entered it by way of the restaurant.

They had decided to go down to the garden to take another look at the countess and her escort, but they were too late. The birds had flown.

"Bah!" cried Fresnay, who always took things cheerfully, "there is nothing lost after all. To-morrow I will give you a full account of Madame de Lugos and Monsieur Tergowitz."

CHAPTER IV.

WHILE Julien Gémozac and his friend Fresnay were looking in vain for Mme. de Lugos, who had just disappeared with her equally mysterious escort, Camille Monistrol and her auxiliaries were preparing to start out upon their chase.

The clock had just struck ten when they assembled in the kitchen of the little house on the Boulevard Voltaire, —all three in full battle array.

Courapied had executed Camille's orders with intelligence and dispatch. A ready-made clothing store had not only provided him with an outfit, but furnished him with a costume for Georget, and likewise one for Mlle. Monistrol.

The clown now wore the garb of a plain but respectable denizen of the suburbs, and Georget looked very trim in a dark blue jacket with a triple row of silver buttons, and a jaunty cap trimmed with silver lace, the uniform of a restaurant page.

But the most successful disguise of all was that of Camille, who was dressed as a journeyman printer, with a long white blouse, and a *béret* that entirely concealed her beautiful black hair, which had been dressed high on the head for the occasion.

One would have supposed that she had worn masculine attire all her life, and as she was quite as tall as Courapied no one would have taken her for a woman. Even Brigitte began to believe that the people in the street would be deceived.

Not that she approved of this nocturnal expedition in company with a professional clown and a child of the ring. On the contrary, she had endeavored to dissuade her young mistress from the project by every means in her power; but as all her eloquence had availed nothing, she had resigned herself with tolerably good grace to what she was powerless to prevent.

The old nurse was a robust woman, as strong and sunburnt as a peasant, as brave as an old soldier, and as faithful as a dog.

She had treated Courapied rather ungraciously at first, but she loved children, and Georget soon won her heart to

such a degree that she exerted herself to the uttermost to prepare a good dinner, to which the father and son did ample justice.

Brigitte would even have bestowed a portion on Vigoureux, but he could not eat without being unmuzzled, and Courapied was strongly opposed to doing that. He knew the animal, and declared that the ferocious dog would devour some one as soon as he could make use of his jaws. He was now lying in one corner of the kitchen, tied to a large table, with the box still between his teeth, and foam upon his lips, growling sullenly, and rolling his blood-shot eyes. It was evident that he realized his defeat, but it was also evident that he was waiting for an opportunity to secure his revenge.

"We are ready," said Camille. "It is time to start."

"You had much better remain at home," growled Brigitte.

"Particularly as Georget and I can perform our task very well without you, mademoiselle. Indeed, I would much prefer to go alone," said Courapied.

"No, father," interposed Georget, eagerly, "Mademoiselle told me I might go, and I am going."

"We will all go," replied Mlle. Monistrol, firmly. "If there is any danger, I wish to share it."

"Danger!" repeated Courapied, "I am sure there can be no danger, as we are merely going to try to discover Zig-Zag's hiding-place. If we thought of arresting him that would be an entirely different matter, for the scoundrel would defend himself, and we should be likely to have a pretty hard time of it."

"All I want this evening is to get a glimpse of him," said Camille. "When I have once seen him, I know what I shall do next."

"I am afraid it will be no very easy matter to see him without his seeing us. You may rest assured that he will not show himself in any public place."

"The main thing is to find out where he is, and if the dog takes us there, as you think he will—"

"Oh! I can answer for that—that is, unless Vigoureux gets away from us, and he won't do that, for the rope is strong, and I have a good grip. He will take us straight to his master's hiding-place, I am sure. It is when we reach that, that our troubles will really begin. But I

can't bear the idea of letting the box go, at least, not until I know what is in it."

"We might kill Vigoureux and then break open the box," suggested Georget.

"That idea is very pleasing to you because the dog has bitten you so often, and I shouldn't mind putting an end to him myself. But, without his assistance we should never succeed in finding Zig-Zag; though if we should succeed in opening the box, we would probably find his papers."

"And something else. If it contained nothing but papers, it wouldn't make such a noise when Vigoureux shakes it."

"There are skeleton keys in it, perhaps, or a dirk. I have known for a long time that he had one, though I never knew what he did with it."

Camille listened to this conversation between father and son with a slight frown.

"You seem to be afraid of this man," she said, coldly.

"We have reason to be, mademoiselle," replied Courapied.

"Very well, I will go alone. The dog will guide me. I am strong enough to hold him."

"As if I would allow such a thing! I should be a coward, indeed! What I said just now was only because I couldn't bear the idea of giving up to the box. But there will be some way to avoid that, perhaps. When we have once found out where Zig-Zag is, we can bring Vigoureux back with us; and then, as we shall have no further need of him, I will give myself the pleasure of shooting him."

As he spoke, Courapied gave the dog a kick that made him spring to his feet with a stifled growl. At the same time, Georget untied the rope that bound him to the table leg, and handed the end of it to his father.

A struggle ensued between the man and the animal; but Vigoureux, being securely muzzled, did not prove a very formidable antagonist, and soon began to tug hard at his chain to reach the door.

"See, he is anxious to go," said Courapied. "We have only to follow him, and he will take us along at a good round pace."

"Camille kissed Brigitte affectionately, and said to her, with all the coolness of an old soldier:

"If I am not at home before morning, go and inform Monsieur. Gémozac, at No. 124 Quai de Jemmapes. Tell him what occurred here this evening. He will take the necessary steps to find me."

"Oh, mademoiselle, no harm can possibly befall you," exclaimed Courapied. "Remember there are three of us; and if there should be a bullet for any one it shall be for me, for I have no fear of death now. I know you will care for the little chap."

"I will never desert him, whatever happens," said Camille; "but I do not want you to endanger your life, and you will not endanger it, to-night, for we will content ourselves with a mere reconnoissance. Besides, if we should be obliged to defend ourselves, I have a revolver under my blouse, and I shall not hesitate to make use of it."

Brigitte raised her clasped hands to Heaven on hearing this startling announcement. The worthy woman knew that Camille was afraid of nothing, but she had not imagined that her young mistress would ever venture to handle a loaded pistol.

The little party started off, with the dog at their head, closely followed by Courapied; and Camille and Georget brought up the rear.

The great question that interested them all was the direction the dog would take.

Vigoureux did not hesitate a second, however, but rushed down the boulevard with an impetuosity that Courapied found it difficult to restrain.

"The rascal knows where he is going," murmured Georget.

"I think so, too," replied Camille, "and his master can not be far off."

"I am not so sure about that. If Zig-Zag were at Versailles, Vigoureux would pull just as hard at the rope. Last year, while we were traveling through Picardy, the dog was locked up in a stable at Roisel, and forgotten, but he broke open the door and overtook us the next evening at Péronne, more than three leagues away. Sometimes, Zig-Zag left him behind on purpose, just to show how easily the dog could track us. More than once he was offered two or three hundred francs for the dog, but he

would not sell him. He knew that Vigoureux would defend him if any officer should ever attempt to arrest him."

"Then you think he was afraid of being arrested?"

"Yes, indeed. He never had any papers all the time he was traveling with us, or if he did, no one ever caught a glimpse of them. So it is not at all strange that he shunned the gendarmes. But he is as shrewd as a monkey, and always succeeds in getting out of a scrape. Besides," added Georget, lowering his voice, "if a policeman should ever attempt to lay hands on him, Zig-Zag would only have to whistle for his dog. Amanda has taught him to leap at anybody's throat at a signal from her, though what that signal is no one knows but herself. Father says that she only has to snap her fingers and look at the man she wants strangled."

Camille started violently. Her father had died of strangulation, and the word Georget had just uttered reminded her of the frightful scene. She said no more, and the child dared not continue the conversation.

They were obliged to walk rapidly in order to keep up with Courapied, who was dragged along by the bull-dog at such a rapid rate that they soon reached the end of the long boulevard, that is to say, the Place du Château-d'Eau.

There was quite a crowd of men and carriages there, but the little party did not attract much attention, for though two or three loungers turned to look at the big dog with a box in his mouth, it was too dark for them to see the leather strap that served as a muzzle.

Camille and Georget, fearing to lose their leader in the crowd, quickened their pace, and saw him turn unhesitatingly into the Boulevard Magenta.

This was some indication, for the broad thoroughfare mentioned leads to Montmartre, or to La Villette, according as one turns to the right or to the left, on reaching the outer boulevards.

The dog's ardor did not seem to abate in the least. He tugged harder than ever at the rope, and though he occasionally paused, it was only to growl at Courapied, who did not walk fast enough to suit him.

"You must be fatigued, mademoiselle," said Georget, timidly.

"No," replied Camille, "I can can walk all night, if need be. But don't call me mademoiselle any longer.

Give me a man's name, and don't fail to use it if any one speaks to us."

"How will Jacques do?"

"As well as any other name, provided you don't forget it."

"Oh, there is no danger of that. But I hope no one will speak to us."

"Because you think they would see that I am a woman? That is very possible. Still, my disguise must be a pretty good one, for none of the passers-by have noticed me."

There were very few pedestrians in the street, however, for late at night the Boulevard Magenta is well-nigh deserted.

On reaching the outer boulevard, Vigoureux turned to the left, into the street leading to the Place Pigalle, which is generally crowded until two o'clock in the morning.

The little party continued on their way without any interruption until they reached the small square where Marshal Moncey's statue stands. On reaching that point, Vigoureux turned into the Avenue de Clichy, which leads to the fortifications.

Near the square there are cafés in which the artists of the neighborhood congregate, and restaurants where the residents of Batignolles dine in small parties. It is a noisy but respectable locality, in short.

Further on, the avenue divides, one of the streets leading to the Porte de Clichy, the other to the Porte Saint-Ouen. The last passes the cemetery in Montmartre, and is not very popular on that account.

From the other branch off countless streets and lanes in which dwell the families of hosts of laborers, and not a few malefactors. It is not yet dangerous, however, though one already perceives that its residents have nothing in common with the well-to-do citizens of the central arrondissements.

Vigoureux chose the least lonely of these streets, to the great satisfaction of Courapied, who had no desire to pass through lonely spots in which thieves are not unfrequently lying in wait for victims; but Courapied's satisfaction was not unalloyed, for he knew that after passing the Porte de Clichy, which was not far off, there would be nothing but a series of vacant lots and squalid hovels.

Vigoureux tugged at the rope more furiously than ever,

like a horse nearing his stable, and Courapied allowed himself to be dragged swiftly on.

Camille and Georget followed closely, but though they occasionally met suspicious-looking characters, and though loud yells and curses resounded from the drinking-saloons they were obliged to pass, Camille heeded them not.

She could think only of her father's murderer, and her impatience to reach his place of concealment increased with every instant. She did not reflect that it would probably be impossible to gain admission into it, and that at night she would find it difficult to get a good look at Zig-Zag and his hands, even if she should be fortunate enough to see him at all. She was filled with a deep thirst for vengeance, and felt firmly convinced that God would suggest to her a way to accomplish her object when the critical moment came.

Courapied, after passing the railway station and reaching the Porte de Clichy, paused to take counsel with his employer.

It was a good place for a conference, for no other human being was visible, and conspirators might have assembled there to plot a tyrant's overthrow with perfect safety.

"Mademoiselle," began Courapied, "we must now decide upon our course. Beyond this gate lies one of the most dangerous parts of the suburbs, and it is there Vigoureux is leading us, unquestionably. One can venture upon the Route de Révolte at this hour of the night only at the risk of one's life."

"Why? Because it is deserted?" inquired Camille.

"Quite the contrary, madamoiselle; because it leads by lanes and alleys in which the worst scoundrels in the city spend their nights. If Zig-Zag is concealed in any of those lanes or alleys, it is not worth while to look for him, as we should not find him, nor should we succeed in getting away alive."

"Let us go on until the dog stops in front of some house, and then we will see."

"But what if he should take us to a *cité?*"

"A *cité?*" repeated Mlle. Monstrol, who had not the slightest idea what he meant.

"A *cité,* mademoiselle, is very like an encampment of savages. It generally consists of hovels planted in the mud, and separated from each other by mire in which one sinks

to one's ankles. The ground is covered with garbage and *débris*, and the police dare not show their faces there."

"But Zig-Zag, who wishes to make an entire change in his mode of life, you say, would not be likely to take refuge in a place like that."

"Oh, not for long; but one stays where one can when one is waiting to step into a new skin. Besides, Amanda has acquaintances in this neighborhood, and has sent me here more than once, so I am familiar with the entire road from Neuilly to Saint-Denis."

"Then you will be an excellent guide. Besides, what is the use of stopping to talk when I am determined to see this through, whatever may happen. Let us go on, you and I; Georget can wait for us here."

The brave little fellow said not a word but walked straight toward the gate.

Courapied could not do less than follow his son's example, so he dealt out more rope to Vigoureux, whom he had had no little trouble in restraining during this short conference, and Camille walked on by his side.

They passed through the gateway, which was guarded by two men, who scarcely glanced at them, though our friends would have been subjected to a much more rigid scrutiny had they been entering, instead of leaving, the city.

"Are not we now upon the dreaded Route de la Révolte?" inquired Mlle. Monistrol, when they had passed the barrière.

"No, mademoiselle," replied Courapied, amazed at his companion's coolness, "but we shall soon reach it. It lies there before us, but this is still the Avenue de Clichy."

"And these huts on either side of the street?"

"They serve as lodgings for the organ-grinders and Punch-and-Judy men that parade the streets. There is no danger that Zig-Zag has taken refuge here. They have met our troupe again and again, in their rounds, and Zig-Zag would not run such a risk of being recognized. Besides, you see that Vigoureux shows no desire to stop."

The dog was, indeed, hastening on with all his might, and five minutes afterward the little party found themselves at the triangle formed by the intersection of the

Avenue de Clichy and the dreaded thoroughfare before mentioned.

"Here we are!" said Courapied. He spoke in subdued tones, as if afraid of being overheard, and yet the place seemed deserted.

There was nothing extraordinary in the appearance of the broad and dimly lightled road which Mme. Monistrol saw before her; yet her companion had not exaggerated the formidable reputation it had acquired by reason of the many crimes committed there.

Its very, name which was bestowed upon it by reason of a revolt that occurred there among the French guards, seems to have predestined it to serve as the scene of frightful events.

It begins at the Porte-Maillot, at the very spot where the Duke of Orleans was killed by being thrown from his carriage, passes through Neuilly, and enters the city only to emerge a little further on and skirt the plain of Clichy, after intersecting the Route d'Asnières at right angles.

Then it penetrates the very center of Bohemia, passing first through the rag-pickers' own particular territory, where they sleep in the open air, and eat in dens where their nameless dishes and vitriolic beverages are the only compounds kept for sale.

Rag-pickers, however, are for the most part honest men, who work all night, and sleep in the daytime; but on nearing Clichy, the road passes under a long railroad bridge, forming a sort of tunnel in which one can waylay and murder a man with little danger of being disturbed in the operation.

On the right, lie vacant lots where vagabonds and malefactors spend their nights; then come dark alleys and muddy lanes, and then the famous "City of the Sun," so called, doubtless, because the sun's rays never gain an entrance there.

On, on they went, past the Cité Foucault, which Camille had never seen before, but which, as she now learned from her companion, was the property of, and under the immediate charge of, a young woman who wore masculine attire, and who did not hesitate to collar disorderly tenants, or break open their doors and forcibly eject them when they persistently declined to pay their rent.

Everybody was asleep in the *cité*, or rather everything was quiet there; and this silence was reassuring.

But opposite it, on the other side of the road, stood a large white building used as an eating and drinking saloon, as the enormous sign painted by an unknown artist indicated beyond any possibility of doubt. This sign represents an enormous saucepan, around which stand a priest, a beadle, an altar boy, and a grave-digger, while in the distance is a long procession of squirrels, advancing, two by two, toward the culinary utensil in which they are to be transformed into a savory stew.

Above this fantastic picture are the words "Le Tombeau des Lapins," a name which has contributed not a little to the renown the establishment has acquired.

The Tombeau des Lapins, or the "Rabbit's Grave," is noted throughout the world, to such an extent, indeed, that the fashionable Alfred de Fresnay had mentioned it to the Countess de Lugos as one of the curiosities of Paris.

All the residents of the neighborhood seemed to have congregated in the lower story, which was brilliantly lighted both within and without. The sound of shouting, quarreling and singing could be distinctly heard, and the company must have been very large, judging from the uproar.

Mademoiselle Monistrol saw very plainly that her companion was by no means tranquil in mind concerning the result of this expedition, but she felt sure that he would not desert her, and it was now too late to discuss the chances of the venture.

So they followed Vigoureux, who seemed to become more and more eager as he approached his journey's end, and passed several other streets dimly lighted by a few oil lamps.

A little further on were occasional hovels, some built of rough boards, others of brick and stone stolen from demolished houses—huts of the most primitive kind though built by civilized men, for two or three of them were composed almost entirely of old sardine boxes filled with earth and cemented together with plaster.

They did not appear to be occupied, however, for not the smallest ray of light was visible.

Still the dog dragged Courapied on. though a wide stretch of sterile fields was all that seemed to lie beyond.

"Can it be he is going to take us to Saint-Denis?" muttered Courapied. "We could not get there much before morning."

Suddenly, Vigoureux made a quick spring to the left, a spring so violent that he nearly broke the rope, and after the spring, a sudden turn that pulled Courapied out of the road which, at this point, is on a level with the fields which it traverses, and which are separated from it only by a ditch, not much deeper than the furrow made by a plowshare. Courapied, dragged on by the dog, crossed this ditch almost without perceiving it, and found himself in a rough and stony field.

Camille and Georget hastily followed him, and here they were again obliged to hold a conference in spite of the frantic struggles of Vigoureux, who nearly pulled poor Courapied's hands off.

It was necessary, first of all, to ascertain where they were, and this was no easy matter on a moonless night. To the right, on the other side of the road, Montmartre loomed up in the distance, while behind our little party hundreds of tiny lights could be seen twinkling in the darkness, some motionless, and only a little way off apparently, others flitting about in the distance like so many will-o'-the-wisps.

"Those first lights are the street lamps in the Cité Foucault," remarked Courapied, "and those further on are the lanterns of the rag-pickers, who are just starting out on their rounds."

"But—in front of us?" inquired Mlle. Monistrol.

"In front of us lies the Plaine Saint-Denis, and unless Zig-Zag has taken refuge in a stone-quarry, I don't see where the brute can be taking us."

"Father," said Georget, "it seems to me I see a house to the right, a little way ahead of us."

"You must have good eyes. I don't see anything."

"I see something," said Camille, "but I can't tell whether it is a house or only a small knoll. At all events, it is there that the dog wants to go, so do not attempt to prevent him from doing so."

"I'm sure nothing would please me better, for I can't hold him much longer: the rope has nearly cut my fingers off. But if we follow him, heaven only knows where he will take us! If we were only sure that there was a house,

it wouldn't make so much difference, but these fields are full of holes, and—"

"The dog has much too good eyesight to fall in them, so he will enable us to avoid them. We shall only have to follow him in single file."

Courapied submitted, though not with very good grace.

About a hundred yards from their last stopping-place, they came to a large pile of stones which they had not seen before, but which was sufficiently high to shelter them from observation.

It was really a house that stood a short distance ahead of them, but it was a most dilapidated house. The roof had partially fallen in, and of the two chimneys which had formerly surmounted it, but one remained. The other in its fall had strewn the surrounding ground with fragments of brick and morter. Nevertheless, there were still shutters to the windows, and the walls seemed sound. Perhaps they only inclosed a vacant space, however, for no fence of any kind protected the remains of a once cozy villa.

What had destroyed it? Certainly not a fire, for the house was of red brick, which still retained their original color. Nor could it have been an enemy's cannon, for there had been no fighting here during the seige.

Courapied cared very little about knowing, however. He only wanted to ascertain if his wife and that odious Zig-Zag had taken refuge within its walls. He did not think so, though Vigoureux persisted in taking him there, in spite of his resistance.

"Well, what are you waiting for?" inquired Mlle. Monistrol.

"I am not waiting for anything," replied Courapied. "I think there is nothing left for us to do but to turn back, for it would be folly for us to try to enter the house at night. I've no objection to trying it in the daytime—"

"By to-morrow the wretch may have fled. Besides, there is nothing to prove that he is there now. I am going to satisfy myself on that point, however," said Camille, leaving the pile of stones that sheltered her, and walking resolutely toward the house.

Georget sprung forward and passed her in the twinkling of an eye, and Courapied, ashamed to hesitate under such

circumstances, yielded to the efforts of Vigoureux to drag him on.

They were only about thirty yards from the mysterious dwelling when they again paused, as if by mutual consent, for even Camille realized the necessity of examining the house before going any further.

There could no longer be the shadow of a doubt that Zig-Zag was there, for the dog was standing on his hind legs, making the most frantic efforts to break the rope that bound him. He also tried to bark, and as the strap that served as a muzzle had become slightly loosened, he succeeded in uttering growls which could be heard quite a distance. But where was the wretch hiding? Behind those walls, or in a cave dug beneath the ruins?

There was an opening in the front wall of the house, the entrance to a gloomy hall, the outer door of which had disappeared; but the prospect was not inviting.

"Let us walk around the house," whispered Courapied. "We shall find a better place, perhaps."

"There's a light, father," said Georget, pointing to one of the windows.

Camille looked, and saw a slender thread of light shining through the imperfectly fitting shutters. Consequently it must be in an habitable room that Zig-Zag had installed himself. She had found him, and there was now nothing to prevent her from compelling him to show himself. She could see his face and his hands distinctly if he came to the window of the lighted room, and after that, she would rush up, pistol in hand, and oblige him to allow himself to be bound by Courapied and Georget.

All this was extravagant and absurd, but Camille had lost the power to reason calmly.

Without hesitation, and without even warning Courapied, she drew her revolver from her pocket, cocked it, picked up a handful of pebbles, and threw them against the shutter.

The light within was instantly extinguished, and Camille then realized for the first time that there was not a particle of common sense in her plan; for, even admitting that Zig-Zag did come to the window instead of making good his escape, she would not be able to see his hands in the dark.

"Let us run, mademoiselle," said Courapied; "there

may be a number of them here; and, in that case, they will certainly kill us. I shall not be able to defend you, for I must hold Vigoureux, and I shall have to let him go, I fear."

"I would rather die here than flee at the moment of finding my father's murderer."

Just then one of the shutters was opened softly.

"Who is there?" asked a woman's voice.

Mademoiselle Monistrol was overwhelmed with astonishment. She was looking for Zig-Zag, and she had drawn a woman to the window.

And yet Vigoureux leaped about so frantically that he must have recognized the voice of the speaker.

Courapied, too, had recognized it, for he exclaimed:

"That is Amanda!"

Unfortunately, he spoke loud enough to be heard in the house, and the effect of the imprudent exclamation was almost instantaneous.

Both shutters were thrown wide open, and a white-robed figure appeared.

Camille and her auxiliaries remained grouped under the window beneath which the apparition stood, the night being sufficiently dark to conceal them effectually.

"Ah, wretch," exclaimed Courapied, overcome with anger, "so I have found you at last! You shall pay dearly for the way you have treated me!"

"What, idiot, is it you?" was the insolent retort. "What has brought you here?"

"I came in search of you, hussy."

"In search of me! Well, that is good! Do you think I am going to run about again from fair to fair with you? I have had enough of your company, so you can go along about your business."

"I shall do nothing of the kind. I've found you now, and you won't get away from me so easily."

"Come and take me then. The door is open."

"Yes, and Zig-Zag is lying in wait for me in the passage."

"You are very much mistaken. I am alone, and you are a coward if you are afraid to venture in. I am only a woman, but I wouldn't be such a chicken-hearted creature as you are for the world."

"You lie! Zig-Zag is with you."

"He is not. He ran away at the same time I did, because the manager wouldn't pay us our dues. But he is not hanging about Paris. He secured an engagement in London, and went there several days ago."

"It is false. But even if it were true, he would be arrested and brought back here to be guillotined."

"On account of that affair on the Boulevard Voltaire? Nonsense! The judge released him, which is proof enough that they had no evidence against him. But you seem to belong to the police now. How much have they promised you for hunting down your former comrade? A nice business you are in! Still, if you were sharp, you might earn a living by it; but you are too stupid. Who did you bring with you, some officers?"

"No, but I am going for some. There is a station-house not far from here."

"Yes, go; I will wait for them. There are three of you, so two can stand guard here while you do your errand. Who are your companions? There is one tall and one short one. I wouldn't be afraid to bet that the small one is that little toad, Georget."

The child was strongly tempted to reply in the affirmative, but his father hastily placed his hand over his mouth.

Camille fairly trembled with impatience as she listened to this strange dialogue, for she felt almost certain that Zig-Zag was there, and longed to devise some means of compelling him to show himself.

"Yes," continued Amanda, "I am sure it is that little imp of a Georget. So he, too, is trying to make trouble for me? All right! I'll pay him for it. But where did you pick up your other friend, the one in a white blouse? Is he some one who has been enticed into the troupe to take Zig-Zag's place?"

As she uttered these concluding words, she cautiously retired from the window, and Courapied fancied she was preparing to make her escape from the other side of the house. He was mistaken, however, for after disappearing for a moment, Amanda suddenly reappeared, and threw out an object that described a luminous curve, like a shooting star, and then falling almost at Camille's feet, suddenly blazed up, and diffused a blinding light around.

It was one of those Bengal lights with which sojourners

at Norman watering-places often amuse themselves by illuminating the beach.

Mlle. Monistrol, surprised and dazzled, recoiled, disclosing to view her full face, which was only partially concealed by her cap.

"Oh, I see!" sneered Amanda's shrill voice. "It is the princess I turned out of the show the other night on the Place du Trône. You must be in her employ now, as you have brought her here. She is hunting after Zig-Zag, because she thinks that Zig-Zag killed her father. Fy! mademoiselle, I would not play the detective if I were you! This is not the Boulevard Voltaire, and upon my word! I have a great mind to punish you as you deserve."

But Camille did not even hear these threats. By the glare of the Bengal light she had dimly distinguished a man's form at the further end of the room, and this vision, though seen but for an instant, engrossed her every thought.

"And so you have stolen Vigoureux, you old scoundrel!" continued Amanda. "I understand now how you found your way here. I sent him for my box of jewelry, which I forgot, and you must have caught him on the sly, for if you had attacked him openly, he would have devoured you. You had better release him, and instantly. If you don't you will be sorry for it."

Courapied did not obey the order, but he was greatly in doubt as to what course he ought to pursue. He did not care to follow Vigoureux into this ruined house, which looked very much like the den of a band of cut-throats; but to set the dog at liberty was to lose the entire fruit of a long and arduous expedition, while to beat a retreat with the terrible beast was an utter impossibility, as it would be necessary to drag him away by main force, and Courapied was nearly exhausted. Besides, the enemy would hardly fail to come to the dog's rescue.

The poor clown looked inquiringly at Camille, but the Bengal light suddenly went out, and their eyes did not meet.

"So you won't release him!" cried Zig-Zag's accomplice. "Ah, well, we will see!" And a sharp whistle broke the silence of the night.

Vigoureux, who recognized the signal, gave such a

furious bound that he dragged Courapied to the entrance of the dark passage in spite of his struggles.

"Help, Georget!" cried the unfortunate husband.

Georget ran and seized the rope with both hands, but the dog gave it a final jerk that severed it just as the father and son disappeared in the passage.

Camille heard two cries of distress, a hollow thud, then—nothing.

The first impulse is always the best one, some people claim, and Mlle. Monistrol rushed forward to the assistance of her friends. The doorway was not far off. She reached it with three bounds, and was about to cross it and fall into the same trap into which Courapied and Georget had fallen; but she stumbled just as she reached the threshold, and so paused, for an instant, to regain her equilibrium. That slight accident saved her life. A strong whiff of cool damp air met her nostrils, and her eyes, which had now become accustomed to the darkness, perceived a deep, yawning gulf instead of the floor she had expected to see.

Now she understood. The father and son, dragged along by Vigoureux, had found beneath their feet only a void, and they had both fallen into the open trap, while the terrible animal, aware of the existence of the treacherous chasm, had cleared it at a bound, and gone to rejoin his owner, concealed in the house.

Camille feared that her unfortunate aids must have been killed in their fall, for they made no outcry, and though Camille listened attentively, she heard no call for help, nor even a moan. And this frightful death had been planned for them by Amanda, who had hoped to make away with Mlle. Monistrol at the same time.

All this flashed through Camille's mind in a second of time, but to come to a realizing sense of the situation was not such an important thing after all. The vital necessity was to decide upon her course, and to decide at once, for the vile creature who had just freed herself of her unfortunate husband by means of a crime, certainly would not be content with that. The opportunity to destroy all Zig-Zag's enemies at one fell swoop would prove too tempting.

But in spite of her danger, the poor girl remained lean-

ing over the black abyss which had ingulfed her allies, unwilling to abandon them.

She called Georget several times, but receiving no reply, she decided that an attempt to rescue them would not only be futile, but would probably cost her her life. Hence, it would be much better to go in search of assistance, and she had not a moment to lose if she would escape the peril that threatened her.

The imprudent expedition upon which Camille had embarked had cost her friends dear, and there was now no other way to repair the injury she had done them than to hasten to the nearest police station and summon the officers to the aid of Amanda's victims.

Just as she had made up her mind to do this, she heard two persons talking in the interior of the house. Amanda's voice, which she instantly recognized, and a deeper voice. Camille could not distinguish a word at first, but as the dialogue progressed, the key in which it was carried on became higher and higher, as is usually the case when people are quarreling, and Mlle. Monistrol soon gained a pretty clear idea of the tenor of the conversation.

It was evident that one of the wretches wanted to kill her, then and there, and that the other was inclined to let her make her escape.

Naturally the young girl did not await the conclusion of the discussion, but fled, not pausing, indeed, until she reached the pile of stones, where she turned to make sure that she was not pursued.

She saw no one, but the night was so dark that she could not see far, but she heard the dog bark distinctly. His owners had evidently unmuzzled him, and he was expressing his delight. The sound came from the house, but Camille, only partially reassured, again started off at the top of her speed toward the Route de la Révolte.

It seemed to her that she would be safer there than in this lonely field, besides she fancied that the road must lead to one of the city gates.

In less than five minutes she found herself upon the macadamized road, where she paused to take breath, and also to decide upon the direction she should take.

Camille knew she would reach the Porte de Clichy if she returned by the same road she had just traversed with

Courapied, but she would be obliged to pass the Tombeau des Lapins, when all the disorderly people of the neighborhood seemed to have assembled that evening; besides the army of rag-pickers was just starting out. The countless lights of their lanterns were still visible in the distance, and Camille was anxious to avoid them, in which she made a great mistake, however, for rag-pickers, in general, are honest fellows, and their company would probably have saved her from any more unfortunate encounter.

She finally started in the opposite direction, without reflecting that this would take her further and further from the fortifications, though she should have remembered that poor Courapied had said: "This vile beast will finally take us to Saint-Denis, I do believe."

So she hastened on at a rapid pace, taking care to walk in the middle of the road; and she walked on in this way for fully a quarter of an hour, with the pistol in her hand, before it occurred to her that she might have turned her back upon the city she was seeking.

She paused, but just as she did so, two forms suddenly arose out of a slight hollow on the side of the road. Mlle. Monistrol, engaged in seeking her way, failed to notice the fact, and after a moment's hesitation, again walked on, though much more slowly. She had not gone far, however, when a slight sound made her start. It seemed to her that she heard footsteps behind her, and she turned to confront the persons who were following her.

She had not time to assume the defensive, however, for two men instantly sprung upon her, one seizing her by the throat, and the other around the body, and she heard these words:

"Hold him fast, while I go through his pockets."

As she struggled with her assailants, Camille almost mechanically pressed the trigger of her revolver, but the bullet was wasted in empty air.

"So the rascal means mischief!" exclaimed one of the thieves. "Wait a minute until I deprive him of his plaything."

As he spoke, he struck the pistol a vigorous blow with a stick he held in his hand, and the weapon flew out of the poor girl's grasp.

Camille uttered a cry, but only one. The iron hand

tightened it's hold upon her throat, until she thought she was about to die, like her father, of strangulation. The idea that one of her assailants was Zig-Zag flashed across her mind, but she soon perceived that all these men wanted was her money, for though she had relapsed into a state of partial insensibility, she still retained sufficient consciousness to hear one of the thieves remark, as he searched her pockets:

"We have made a good haul this time. Here's a handful of gold in one pocket, and a watch in another. A droll apprentice this fellow is. His hands are as soft as a girl's."

"Why, it is a girl!" he added, suddenly. For the cap Camille wore had just fallen off, and her hair, becoming unfastened, tumbled down about her shoulders.

"A girl?"

"Yes, and not a bad looking one, either."

"Hurry up, then; and as soon as we've divided the plunder, let's take her to the hut that Father Alexandre built out of broken pots, and that has been vacant ever since he was sent to jail."

Camille, who had now regained her senses, guessed the terrible fate that they were reserving for her. She was resolved not to submit to it, but her only means of escaping it was to compel them to kill her.

Her hands were now free, and she suddenly made use of them to jerk out the handkerchief which had been stuffed into her mouth, and before the wretches had time to silence her, she cried out at the top of her voice:

"Help, help! Murder!"

She did not expect any one would come to her assistance. She only hoped her assailants would kill her to silence her.

And one of them did exclaim, savagely, as he again seized her by the throat:

"If you keep on howling like that, I'll beat your brains out."

One of the thieves took her by the shoulders, the other took her by the feet, and they had already carried her across the ditch on the side of the road, when the one at her head remarked to his companion:

"Wait a minute. It seems to me I hear somebody coming up on the run."

"Oh, it's only some rag-picker starting out on his round, and running because he is late. You know the police always walk slowly in going their rounds."

Camille had also heard the hurried footsteps, and wondered whether they were those of a preserver or of an enemy.

Fortunately, this question was soon answered.

The two scoundrels released her. She fell to the ground, and while she was trying to rise, a man, of whom she caught but a glimpse, attacked her assailants, vigorously plying a stout cane that he held in his hand.

He used it to such good purpose that both the scoundrels recoiled. The one with the stick attempted to defend himself, but a heavy blow disarmed him, and this blow was followed by a shower of impartially distributed ones. The scoundrel who had rifled Camille's pockets received a severe cut across the face, and fled, howling with pain; the other, struck upon the head, lost no time in following his companion.

The stranger who had so opportunely appeared was left master of the field. A few seconds had sufficed for the dispersal of the cowardly rascals, and the victor scorned to give chase. He knew that they would not repeat the attack, and he saw that their victim was in great need of succor, so he approached to offer a helping hand.

"Ah, well, my lad," he said, cheerfully, "there is no great harm done, I hope. Still, it was a fortunate thing that the idea of returning to Paris by this road occurred to me. But what the devil are you doing here, at this hour of the night? If you came to spend your earnings at the saloons it's a great pity, for those rascals must have robbed you of your money, and I am surprised that they did not murder you into the bargain. You must have been frightened nearly to death. Lean on me; you don't seem able to stand."

"Oh, sir, you have saved my life," faltered Camille.

The feminine timbre of the voice that thanked him evidently astonished the stranger, for he recoiled a step or two, and gazed searchingly at this apprentice who spoke so much like a young lady; then, seeing the long tresses that fell in disorder upon the blouse, his tone and manner underwent a sudden change.

"Excuse me, madame," said he; "I had no idea that this costume sheltered—"

"A young lady," Mlle. Monistrol concluded for him. "I will explain why I assumed this disguise; but first of all, let me entreat you, sir, to assist me in succoring some friends."

"Some friends! You are not alone then?"

"No. I came here in company with a man and child."

"Well, what has become of them?"

"A trap was set for them. They fell into it, and I fear they have not survived their fall."

"What! here on this plain?" asked the stranger, with an incredulous smile.

"No, in a tumble-down house, near by."

"Old and tumble-down, but probably inhabited, as you say the trap was set for your friends."

"Yes, by wretches I was seeking in the hope of being able to deliver them up to justice—a murderer and his accomplice."

Her preserver evinced no surprise, though he probably thought Camille was mad.

"How did it happen that you were spared?" he enquired, with mingled pity and interest.

"Because I fled. I could do nothing to aid them, and I wished to live to avenge them."

"And the wretches pursued you to this place?"

"No, sir, the scoundrels from whom you just delivered me were thieves who attacked me as they would have attacked any other passer-by."

"But do you know anything about the persons in the house you speak of?"

"One of them killed my father."

"In that case you should have chosen members of the police force for your companions," remarked the gentletlemen, coldly.

"I had reasons which I will explain for dispensing with their assistance. But, in Heaven's name, don't let us waste any more time here. Two unfortunate fellow-beings have sacrificed themselves for my sake, and if I should abandon them I could never forgive myself."

"Pardon me, mademoiselle, but you just told me that they must have been killed; so you will only imperil your life uselessly by returning to the scene of the catastrophe.

It is not very likely that the guilty parties have left the place, and we two would prove no match for them, I fear. I, for my part, do not feel like risking it, though I am no coward, as I think I have proved to you."

"Certainly. I hardly know how to express my gratitude. But must I leave my defenders at the mercy of those wretches?"

"The first thing to be done is to take you to a place of safety, and you will not be safe until you are back in Paris. If we remain here, we shall certainly be attacked, and next time I may not be as fortunate in my opponents."

"Of course, I should be unwilling to expose you to further danger," said Mlle. Monistrol, quickly.

"Then you must permit me to escort you home, and to-morrow, with your permission, I will divulge the facts to the chief of police."

"No, that would do no good," murmured Camille, who had felt but little confidence in the intelligence and good-will of the detective service since the release of Zig-Zag.

"Would you prefer that I should act upon my own responsibility?" asked the obliging stranger. "I am entirely at your service. That which would be wholly impracticable to-night I would willingly attempt by daylight, and I assure you that you shall soon receive information, not only concerning the fate of your friends, but in regard to the movements of your enemies. Take my arm, mademoiselle, and let us get away from here as soon as possible, I beg."

Just then the distant barking of a dog made Camille tremble.

"That terrible dog!" she murmured. "They have set him on my track. He might spring upon us and tear us into pieces. Let us go at once."

She took the proffered arm of her protector, who seemed more anxious to leave the place than she was. He led her in the same direction she was going when the robbers attacked her; but after proceeding a short distance, he turned into a cross-road that took them straight to the Porte de Saint-Ouen.

Vigoureux had ceased to bark, or at least they no longer heard him. Mlle. Monistrol was gradually regaining her composure, and, though she could not entirely overcome her remorse in thinking of her friends, she began to

bestow more attention upon this brave defender whom a kind Providence had sent to her relief.

The night was too dark for her to be able to distinguish his features, and it was not until they had reached the barrière that the gas-light enabled her to distinctly see the man to whom she was indebted for her preservation.

They had walked rapidly, without exchanging a word, and Camille was grateful to her new friend for his consideration and reserve.

The street-lamps became much more numerous as they neared the Porte de Saint-Ouen, and Camille could see that her preserver was tall, slender, and extremely elegant in appearance. She saw, too, that he was dressed like a fashionable gentleman, in a well-fitting overcoat, tall hat, and kid gloves. The cane he had used with such telling effect was a stick of medium size, surmounted by a heavily wrought silver head. Nor would one have supposed that this handsomely dressed gentleman had just been engaged in such a lively conflict. His toilet was intact, even to the buttons on his gloves.

But what could this gentleman, who seemed to belong to the aristocracy, be doing on the Plaine Saint-Denis at this hour of the night?

As Mlle. Monistrol asked herself this question again and again, it occurred to her that this mutiny had perhaps been planned by this carefully attired gentleman. But what could have been his object? Besides, her champion could not have known that she was there, and he certainly had no acquaintance with the acrobat or tight-rope dancer who had just disposed of poor Georget and Courapied so summarily.

Camille might almost have believed that the stranger could read her thoughts, for when but a few steps from the barrière he broke the silence by saying:

"You must be surprised to meet me on the Route de la Révolte at such an unheard-of hour, mademoiselle. Pray don't think that I choose that notorious street for my daily promenade. I dined this evening with some old friends of mine who have a villa near Saint-Ouen, and instead of driving back to Paris, the fancy seized me to take a stroll through this locality, which furnishes so many exciting items for the daily press. I was actuated, probably, by a vague hope of meeting with some adventure; and I con-

gratulate myself upon the very agreeable one that has befallen me. But remember," he added, gayly, "that I have reason to be equally surprised to find you roaming about in a place where young ladies rarely venture."

"I have already told you what took me there," murmured Mlle. Monistrol, considerably embarrassed.

"Oh, I do not presume to ask for any further explanation. But will you allow me to tell you who I am? My name is George de Menestreau. I am thirty years old, the possessor of some property, and the last of my race. I have traveled a good deal in the East, and I returned to Paris about a week ago with the intention of taking up my permanent abode here; I think I have wandered about the world enough, and would like to settle down. But my private history will not interest you much, I fear; so I will not dwell any longer upon that theme. We are now in Paris," he added, in the most courteous possible tone, "and I am entirely at your service. Shall I escort you to your home, or would you prefer to return to it without me. In that case, I will accompany you only as far as the nearest carriage-stand. But, now I think of it, the scoundrels who assaulted you perhaps robbed you of all the money you had about you?"

"They took my money and my watch," replied Camille, "but that doesn't matter, I can pay the coachman when I reach home."

As she spoke, she took another furtive look at the stranger, and perceived, with no little satisfaction, that he had a handsome and genial face. He was very dark-complexioned: his eyes were clear and bright, his smiling lips were adorned with a silky black mustache, and he did not look as old as he claimed to be.

Mlle. Monistrol was a woman, and consequently the idea of being saved by a handsome and distinguished-looking young man was much more agreeable than that of being under obligations to an unprepossessing rustic.

Just then a belated vehicle, which was returning to Paris after a suburban trip, came in sight, but Camille could not thus part forever from a man who had risked his life to save her, and she said to him:

"I prefer to return home alone, sir, but I hope to see you again to-morrow. I reside at No. 292 Boulevard

Voltaire. Camille Monistrol is my name; and if you do not object to going such a long distance—"

"You need have no fears of that," replied the young man, quickly. "But it seems to me that your name is familiar to me."

"You have probably seen it in the papers in connection with my father's murder."

"What! Can it be that you are—?"

"The daughter of Jean Monistrol, who was killed before my very eyes, and whom I have sworn to avenge!"

"Oh, I understand now why I found you on that lonely plain. You were seeking your father's murderer and he escaped you by committing another crime. I will take the place of the friends who perished in assisting you, and the scoundrels will not get rid of me so easily. Say the word, mademoiselle, and I will start out in pursuit of them to-morrow. I can find the house, if you will kindly describe it to me; I will force my way into it, and—"

"It is built of red brick—but—stop, coachman!"

"All right!" replied the driver, checking his horse. "To what part of the city do you wish to go?"

"To the Place du Trône."

"That suits me. I am on my way back to the Avenue Parmentier. Get in."

"Good-bye, then, until to-morrow," said Camille, with an emotion which she could not wholly conceal.

M. de Menestreau bowed over her proffered hand respectfully, assisted her into the carriage, and gave the coachman the exact address.

Mlle. Monistrol seemed likely to have a much more valuable ally than Julien Gémozac in the person of this gentleman, and certainly one that pleased her better.

CHAPTER V.

On losing sight of the Countess de Lugos at the Café des Ambassadeurs, Alfred de Fresnay feigned an indifference he did not feel, for in his secret heart he was not a little annoyed to find that he would be obliged to wait until the next day to see the chestnut-haired beauty again. Nevertheless, when Julien announced that he was not sleepy, and that he intended to return to the club, no urging was

required to induce his friend to accompany him, for Fresnay felt sure that luck would continue to smile upon him, and that he would be sure to win several hundred shining louis before morning.

The contrary happened, however, as is not unfrequently the case.

Julien met with a most remarkable run of luck, while the presumptuous Alfred lost heavily and continuously.

About two o'clock in the morning, finding his pockets entirely empty, he borrowed ten louis from Gémozac, and went quietly off to the Peters Restaurant to console himself.

As he looked about the crowded room in search of a seat, he noticed, seated alone at a table in a most quiet corner of the restaurant, a rather peculiar-looking young woman, who was modestly supping upon a slice of ham and a half bottle of claret, though one instinctively felt that she would greatly prefer truffles and champagne.

There was one vacant seat beside her, and Fresnay lost no time in taking possession of it.

The young woman was not pretty, nor was she tastefully dressed, but there was an air of piquancy about her that savored strongly of Bohemia, and that could not fail to excite the curiosity of a *blasé* man of the world in quest of new adventures.

He resorted to no circumlocution in beginning the conversation.

"That is not a particularly savory morsel," he remarked, glancing at the ham, "and what you are drinking can not be much better."

"That is very possible; still, I do not see that it is any business of yours," was the snappish response. "Did you sit down here to make fun of my supper?"

"No, my dark-eyed angel, but to offer you a better one."

"Then you can remain."

"On condition that you will order it, however."

"With pleasure. A roast chicken, a salad, strawberries, and some Burgundy. Champagne does not agree with me."

Fresnay called the waiter and repeated the order. A single glance around the room showed him that the other guests were enjoying themselves hugely at his expense; so

he instantly resolved to get even with them by pretending to treat his companion with the most profound respect.

"Pardon me, my dear madame, for speaking to you so familiarly," he said, in the same tone he would have used in addressing a lady of the highest rank. "You must think me very impertinent."

"No, I think you very odd," replied the brunette, without the slightest embarrassment; "and I like eccentric people."

"I have never seen you here before, and I am an habitué of the place," remarked Fresnay, "so this is probably the first time you ever set foot in it."

"Yes, and it will probably be the last. I arrived in Paris this evening, terribly hungry, and so dropped into the first restaurant I came to. But to-morrow all my fun will be over, as I must go to work again to earn my living."

"In what way?" inquired Fresnay.

"You seem to be very inquisitive."

"No, I am interested in you, that is all. Have you a lucrative profession?"

"I am a clairvoyant."

"Oh, yes, I understand. You mean that you are a fortune-teller."

"Yes, I can tell fortunes with cards if any one wishes me to; but my specialty is to foretell future events, relate what has happened in the past, and find missing articles."

"How fortunate! I have always wanted to know how I should turn out, and if you can tell me—"

"That is no difficult matter. You will come to some bad end. But I do not give consultations in a restaurant."

"Then give me your address."

"Impossible. I have none just at present."

"But you will at least tell me your name?"

"My name is Olga."

"Olga! That is a very pretty name; but Olga what?"

"Must I show you my papers—my certificate of birth and of marriage?"

"You are married, then?"

"What difference can that possibly make to you? This roast fowl is tender, but there are not enough truffles. Why don't you eat some of it?"

"I don't like white meats."

"Nor dark-complexioned women, eh?"

"On the contrary, I adore them."

"Oh, pray don't try to make me believe that you have fallen in love with me. I assure you that I am not sufficiently verdant to swallow that. But tell me, you are rich, are you not?"

"My wealth is beyond computation; but this evening I haven't a penny, unfortunately."

"I certainly hope you have enough to pay for the supper," said Olga, quickly.

"For what do you take me? I have enough, and more than enough, money in my pocket to settle the bill. Besides, I am well known here, and they would trust me, if I wished them to."

Olga again turned her attention to her supper, though not with a very tranquil mind, for it was evident that she feared she had fallen in with a practical joker, who was likely to leave her with the bill to pay, and this bill threatened to be no paltry one, for just then the waiter, who knew the baron's tastes, placed upon the table a lobster, a large dish of *pâté de foie gras*, and a bottle of champagne.

The baron, as he did ample justice to this tempting *menu*, furtively watched his guest, who was beginning to amuse him very much.

"I see that you either can not, or will not, give me your address," he said suddenly; "but there is nothing to prevent me from giving you mine."

"I am sure I have no objections," tranquilly responded Olga, as she drained her glass.

Alfred drew one of his visiting cards from his pocket and laid it on the table in front of his neighbor who, as she glanced at it, exclaimed:

"What! you are a baron! How charming! I like aristocratic people, I do; and I flatter myself that they usually take to me. I have told the fortunes of more than one countess and marquise, I can tell you."

"I will bring another to see you some day, if you like, and you can charge her whatever you please. I will pay the bill," said Fresnay, thinking of the chestnut-haired Hungarian. "Keep my card, and let me know when you will be ready to receive us."

"Oh, I see, you want me to speak a good word for you. Well, you seem to be a very nice sort of a gentleman, so I don't mind doing you a good turn, especially as you have treated me so handsomely this evening."

"Then I may hope to see you again?"

"Yes, only I trust that you will not tell any one that I took supper here with you this evening. It might injure my business."

"Whom the deuce do you think I am likely to make my confidante in this matter?"

"Why the lady your are going to bring to see me. If she knew I had supped here with you, she might place no faith in my predictions."

"You need not have the slightest fears of that. I shall be as silent as the grave. But tell me something about yourself. You have not always been a clairvoyant, I presume."

"No, though I have been following the profession for some time. I haven't made my fortune at it, yet, alas! A rolling stone gathers no moss you know, and I have roamed about the world a good deal."

"Wealth will come in time, never fear. But as you don't like champagne, what do you say to a second bottle of Musigny. The first is empty, I see."

"Do you want to get me intoxicated? No, don't think of ordering any more. The supper will cost you enough as it is. I wish you would tell me what time it is, instead."

"Nearly four o'clock," replied Fresnay, glancing at his watch.

"Four o'clock!" repeated his companion. "Good heavens! I shall not get there in time."

As she spoke, Olga threw her napkin upon the table and prepared to rise.

"What can possess you?" expostulated Fresnay. "You haven't finished your salad yet, and the waiter has just gone to get the strawberries."

"That makes no difference. I can not wait for him."

"But where are you going in such haste?"

"To the Western Railway Station, if you must know."

"Won't you allow me to accompany you to the depot?"

"By no means. There are plenty of carriages at the

door of the restaurant, and I am not afraid to take the drive alone. Finish your supper in peace, my friend, and you shall soon hear from me—if you keep your promise."

Olga had already risen to her feet, and Alfred was obliged to yield to her will. She favored him with an energetic shake of the hand, and then left the room with a deliberate step and all the dignity of a tragedy queen.

Fresnay, not knowing what to think of this strange creature, beckoned to the head waiter, in the hope of obtaining some information from him.

"I will settle both bills," he said. "Do you know that lady?"

"No, sir; I never saw her before, and I feel quite sure that this is the first time she has ever been here."

"Had she been here long when I came in?"

"Nearly an hour. The proprietor was unwilling to serve her, on account of her peculiar dress and appearance, but I suggested to him that she was probably a foreigner."

"She speaks French too well for that. Bring me some coffee and a glass of brandy."

His late adventure interested him, from the fact that it was not in the least commonplace. One does not meet clairvoyants every day at the Café Américain. Where did this one come from, and why did she rush away before four o'clock, like Cinderella, at the first stroke of midnight? Alfred endeavored to solve this mystery, but in vain; so he finally returned home and went to bed, rather the worse for the numerous glasses of brandy he had taken to assist him in his mental efforts.

He did not open his eyes until nearly noon the next day, and had no little difficulty in recalling the events of the previous night.

The most disagreeable of these events was certainly the loss of his two hundred and sixty louis, but he had been winning a good deal for some time past, so he consoled himself with the thought that his good luck would soon return.

His recollection of Olga had become rather indistinct, but the image of the chestnut-haired beauty was indelibly engraved upon his heart, and he immediately resolved to pay her the call he had promised the evening before.

So he breakfasted, made a very careful toilet, and between the hours of two and three repaired to the Grand Hôtel.

The clerk could not find the name upon the register at first, but after looking some time he announced that the lady in question had arrived that morning, that her apartments were on the third floor, and that she was in.

"That is strange," Fresnay said to himself. "She gave me this address yesterday, and she has been here only since early this morning."

Upon the first landing he met a gentleman who, on perceiving him, averted his face and applied his handkerchief to his nose in such a way as to effectually conceal his visage; but his figure and general appearance forcibly reminded Fresnay of the Hungarian Mme. de Lugos had joined the evening before at the Café des Ambassadeurs.

"Good!" he thought, "I am just in time. A quarter of an hour sooner I should have found my place taken. Now it is vacant, and I shall amuse myself a little by joking the countess on the assiduous attentions of her compatriot. Heaven grant that she may give me a cordial reception. She must have finished her toilet by this time; besides, I have the vanity to believe that she is expecting a visit from me."

He was quite out of breath when he reached the third floor and rapped at the door of the fair lady's apartments. Another surprise awaited him there, for soon he heard a light step, the door was partially opened, and a woman's face appeared.

Two exclamations of surprise resounded at the same instant. The woman recognized him, and he, too, recognized her.

It was Olga, the clairvoyant of the Café Américain, who stood before him.

She had changed her costume for the trim coquettish attire of the typical soubrette, and this new garb became her well.

Instead of admitting Fresnay immediately, the shrewd creature closed the door directly behind her, opened the door leading into the corridor a little wider, and exclaimed:

"What, is this you? What brought you here?"

"I called to see the lady I promised to bring to you to

have her fortune told," replied Fresnay, laughing; "but as I find you here—"

"Don't speak so loud, I beg. If she should hear you—"

"So you are her maid?"

"As you see."

"And it was to meet her at the Western Railway Station that you left me so abruptly this morning?"

"Yes. So you know her?"

"Certainly. She is even expecting a visit from me. Ask her if she is not. Shall I give you my card? No, that is unnecessary, for I gave you one at the restaurant, and I am sure that you have not lost it, and that you know the name by heart."

The peal of a bell resounded from the next room.

"My mistress is becoming impatient, and I must go. But not a word, promise me. If madame knew you had met me before she might dismiss me."

"And you would be reduced to fortune-telling again. Very well, I will say nothing, on condition that you will give me some information from time to time, in regard to this same Countess de Lugos, and the life she is leading in Paris."

Olga had not time to reply, for Mme. de Lugos, losing patience, opened the inner door herself, and paused in very evident astonishment on seeing her maid engaged in conversation with a man whom she did not at first recognize.

Fresnay lost no time in averting the questions that were evidently upon the lady's lips.

"Pardon me, madame," he said, removing his hat, "your maid, who does not know me, refused me admission; but I insisted on being received. Did I do wrong?"

"No," replied the countess, after an instant's hesitation. "I was just going out, but as you have taken the trouble to climb so many stairs—"

"A thousand thanks. I will promise not to detain you long."

Olga stepped aside to allow the baron to pass. The countess's apartments consisted, apparently, of three communicating rooms, the first of which was filled with immense trunks that seemed to be nearly new.

"You see I am scarcely settled yet," remarked Mme.

de Lugos. "I don't expect to make a very long stay at the hotel, and that is the reason I have not yet opened my innumerable trunks. But I have a parlor where we can chat more comfortably."

Then turning to her maid, she added:

"I am at home to no one."

Alfred followed the countess into the stiffly furnished parlor, and seated himself beside her on the sofa.

"I must confess that I did not expect to see you again," began Mme. de Lugos. "I felt sure that you had entirely forgotten our chance meeting at the Concert Café by this time."

"Then you are not offended with me for having ventured to call?" asked Fresnay, quickly.

"No; but I am afraid that I was rash in promising to receive you. Still, we are of the same social rank, and I must confess that your conversation last evening entertained me greatly, so perhaps it matters very little after all."

"Certainly not. What harm can a little innocent conversation do either of us? But, by the way, what have you done with Monsieur Tergowitz?"

"What a memory you have for names!"

"And faces, too. I just met the gentleman on the stairs, and recognized him instantly."

"He did just leave me. You are not disposed to censure me for receiving his visits, I suppose?"

"Oh, no. I have plenty of faults, but I am not jealous."

"Jealous!" repeated the countess, bursting into a laugh. "What right have you to be jealous in this case, pray?"

"It would be rather presumptuous, that's a fact. Besides, your Hungarian friend is a very gentlemanly looking fellow, and I hope that after the concert he showed you some interesting portion of this strange city with which you are so anxious to become acquainted."

"On the contrary, he only took me to the Café Napolitain to get an ice, and then escorted me back to the hotel. I was terribly tired, and slept, oh so soundly!"

"I did not. I thought of you all night, and did not go to bed until five o'clock this morning. I can not sleep when I am in love."

"In love, you! Confess the truth. You spent the night at the card-table or in supping with your friends."

"I don't deny it. That is my way of curing my heart-aches. This time the remedy did not prove effectual, however. I lost a great deal of money, and I am more entirely your slave than ever."

"You will soon be cured of your infatuation. The pecuniary loss is a more serious matter, and if it be large—"

"Oh, it will not inconvenience me. I have money enough to indulge in a few expensive whims if I choose. There is one I should like to gratify. May I? It depends entirely upon you."

"Upon me?"

"Yes, I inherited, last year, the property of an uncle, who bequeathed to me, among other things, a very pretty little house on the Rue Mozart, in Passy. I have never succeeded in renting it, and I never could make up my mind to live in it. It is too far off. I prefer my rooms on the Rue de l'Arcade."

"Ah! you live on the Rue de l'Arcade?"

"Yes, at No. 19. I forgot to tell you yesterday that I have very cozy bachelor quarters there. But I have just taken it into my head to rent my house on the Rue Mozart to a pretty woman, and as you say you want a house, why should you not be the tenant I am looking for?"

"You must have lost your senses!"

"By no means. You need sign no lease, and you will be at liberty to leave the house at any time; but during your stay in Paris, you would be infinitely more comfortable there than in a hotel, so I don't see why you should not accept my proposal."

"But I came to Paris to enjoy myself, and I fear I should find it very dull there."

"It shall not be my fault if you do. I promise you that. Will you accept my offer?"

"Can you suppose that I can answer yes or no exactly as if it were only a question of taking a drive in the Bois? What a strange opinion you must have formed of me."

"And why, if you please? The arrangement I propose is very sensible, it seems to me. You told me yesterday that you were looking for suitable quarters. I offer you

my house at whatever rental you may think proper. Give me the preference. That is all I ask."

"I must have time for reflection," said the countess, laughing.

"In other words, you wish to consult Monsieur Tergowitz."

"I never consult anything but my own inclination. You seem to be entirely mistaken in regard to the nature of my relations with that gentleman. He was one of my father's dearest friends."

"Indeed! He looks very young for that."

"He is a little older than I am. I should have said that he was my father's ward. We were brought up together. You will not be likely to meet him, however, for he just called to inform me that he expects to leave Paris this evening. Important business matters oblige him to return to Hungary. By the way, you suggested my consulting some friend just now. Let me suggest that you, in turn, consult the gentleman you introduced to me last evening—Monsieur Gémozac. Ask him what he thinks of this scheme of yours."

"I don't think he would even take the trouble to express an opinion. Mademoiselle Camille Monistrol engrosses all his thoughts, and he has ceased to take any interest in my affairs. He has been seized with an irresistible desire to discover the late Monistrol's assassin, and if he is not speedily cured of his folly, it will not surprise me to see him a member of the detective force."

"I can not find it in my heart to blame him. Indeed, I should be very grateful to you if you would keep me informed of your generous friend's efforts to aid that young girl in avenging her father."

"I will not fail to do so, and I thank you for thus giving me an assurance that I shall see you often. You shall have a full report every day, if you wish."

"But I must trespass upon your time no longer," he added, rising suddenly. "I hope to receive a favorable answer to my proposal to-morrow, my dear countess, and until then good-bye."

He left the room so hastily that he nearly overturned Olga, who was listening at the door. He motioned her to follow him, and as she accompanied him to the end of the

passage, he found an opportunity to whisper, as he slipped a one hundred-franc note into her hand:

"You see I am willing to pay liberally. Serve me faithfully, and you will make more money than you ever did by fortune-telling. You know where I live. Call and see me occasionally, between the hours of ten and eleven, in the morning. I shall have a host of questions to ask you, and I will not haggle about the price of your information."

CHAPTER VI.

CAMILLE MONISTROL, being nearly overwhelmed with fatigue and emotion, did not rise until very late on the morning following the eventful night which had so nearly been her last.

Brigitte, whom she had aroused about two o'clock in the morning to pay and dismiss the coachman, had refrained from questioning her about her adventures, and even from asking why Courapied and Georget had not returned with her.

Brigitte did not regret their absence by any means, and especially congratulated herself upon being well rid of Vigoureux, the terrible brute that seemed inclined to devour everything and everybody that came in his way.

She hoped, too, that her young mistress had renounced her chimerical schemes of revenge; and Camille did not think it advisable to undeceive her. Still less could she confess to Brigitte that a young man who was almost a stranger to her now engrossed her thoughts, and that she was even now impatiently awaiting his coming.

This was the real state of things, however. She could hardly wait to see the brave defender who had rescued her, at the peril of his life, from the hands of two vile wretches. She owed more than life to him, and yet she had scarcely had time to express her gratitude. Indeed, he had evaded her thanks with a modesty that greatly enhanced the value of the service rendered.

He had promised to call and see her, but would he keep his promise? Camille almost doubted it. She said to herself that a man of the world would feel it his duty

to succor a young girl assailed by scoundrels in a lonely spot, but that he would not consider it incumbent upon him to continue the acquaintance thus formed; and this man was evidently a man of the world—one who must move in the very best society, in fact. The name he bore, his personal appearance, his attire and his distinguished manners, all indicated, beyond any possibility of doubt, that he belonged to the aristocracy.

Why, then, should he give any further thought to a singular adventure, which was evidently in no way connected with his ordinary life? The little that Camille had said to him about her personal situation, and her expedition in search of an assassin, was not calculated to induce a fashionable gentleman to grant her his protection, much less to second her in her efforts. Men willing to make detectives of themselves, to oblige a woman, are rare.

And yet, Mlle. Monistrol must rely upon this young man's assistance not only in her attempt to find Zig-Zag, but also Courapied and his son, who had paid so dearly for their devotion. Were they dead, or had they survived their terrible fall? However that might be, Camille could not abandon them. Indeed, she already began to reproach herself bitterly for having followed the advice of M. de Menestreau, who had urged her to return home, and not incur a risk of sharing the fate of her unfortunate auxiliaries.

He had probably done quite right in thus preventing her from endangering her life, but this certainly need not deter her from making the attempt under more favorable conditions: that is to say, by daylight, and with more formidable weapons than a pocket pistol, and, above all, with a brave and sensible friend who would not shrink from danger, but who would run no unnecessary risk.

And this friend could be only this same M. de Menestreau. Camille could think of no other person who was in a position to attempt this difficult task. If he failed her, there would be nothing left for her but to apply to the police, though she had lost all confidence in them since her father's death.

On rising, she resumed her mourning garments, and, after vainly attempting to do justice to Brigitte's excellent breakfast, she went out into what she called her garden, that is to say, into the yard that surrounded the

house. There were some borders where she had sown a few seeds that were just beginning to spring up, and she never failed to water them morning and evening. She was about to do so now, when the sound of carriage wheels made her start.

She turned quickly, but she saw, instead of the person she was expecting, Mme. Gémozac and her son alighting from a handsome coupé.

They could not have come at a more inopportune moment; but it was too late to avoid them, so Camille stepped forward to meet them. Julien bowed low, and Mme. Gémozac, kissing the young girl upon both cheeks, said, in a most affectionate tone:

"I have come to you, my dear child, as you will not come to us. They talk only of you at home, and my husband would have accompanied me if his time was not so entirely engrossed by business. Julien, who is differently situated, would insist upon calling with me."

Camille stammered a few words of thanks, but it was very evident that her thoughts were elsewhere.

"How did you spend the day yesterday, after you left us?" continued Mme. Gémozac. "I have done very wrong to leave you alone in this house, which must be so full of harrowing associations; and really I must insist upon your leaving it as soon as possible. We are all very fond of you, and I hope that you will consider yourself quite one of our family, and that you will not grieve us by living so far aloof from us."

"I am very grateful to you, madame," replied the girl; "but I explained to you why I desired to remain where I am. I have a duty to perform; and, until I succeed in finding my father's murderer—"

"What! you still persist in that scheme, my dear Camille? Why, it is arrant folly."

"Possibly, madame, but I shall not abandon it."

"Then permit me to remind you that you have accepted my aid," interposed Julien.

"I know it, sir, and I do not repent of it. But I, too, must act in the matter; and I now have reason to believe that I shall discover the culprit. I at least know that he has renounced his former business, and also that he is still in Paris."

"In that case it will be impossible for him to escape a well-organized search. He can easily be identified by the remarkable shape and size of his hands, and I shall begin by giving the detectives I employ a full description of them. I shall also assist them, if necessary, in ferreting out the wretch."

"I am deeply grateful to you, sir, for your kindly intentions," Camille replied.

But all the while she was thinking:

"It is not you who will find Zig-Zag, however; and the only man who is capable of finding him does not come."

Mme. Gémozac did not think it advisable to oppose her son just then; but she resolved to make him listen to reason as soon as she was again alone with him.

The prudent mother's visit to Mlle. Monistrol was not due solely to the interest she felt in the orphan. It had an object. Mme. Gémozac had perceived that her son was deeply interested in Camille; and that very morning she had extorted from Julien a confession that he was deeply in love with the young lady.

Mme. Gémozac, though she did not really oppose this plan of a marriage with the wealthy heiress of the inventor, Monistrol, nevertheless felt it her duty to become better acquainted with the young girl before giving her consent to the match.

Camille was a very charming girl, but the Gémozacs knew almost nothing about her. They had never seen her until after her father's death, and were entirely ignorant of her habits of life, and of her true character. Lovers seldom trouble themselves about these details; mothers feel very differently, and Mme. Gémozac did not intend that her son should declare his love without her consent, and she also hoped to prevent him from engaging in a dangerous and absurd undertaking merely to please a foolish young girl.

Feeling the necessity of changing the subject without delay, she hastily remarked:

"And this is the house you refuse to leave! How can you be so fond of it?"

"I have always lived here, madame, and my father died here," replied Mlle. Monistrol, rather dryly.

"But it is not a suitable home for a young girl."

"And why, madame?"

"Because it is too lonely. The woman you spoke of yesterday is with you to protect you, I hope?"

"Brigitte? Yes, madame. She is here. Would you like to see her? I will call her if you wish."

"No, that is not necessary. But will you not invite us in? I am anxious to see again the room in which your poor father was killed. My son has told me all that occurred during that terrible night."

"I have not forgotten what he did for me," murmured Camille.

"But what I did, mademoiselle, is nothing in comparison with what I would like to do," said Julien, eagerly. "I need only a word from you—"

"Are you not going in the house?" interrupted Mme. Gémozac, anxious to cut short her son's offers of service.

"Do you really insist upon it?" asked Mlle. Monistrol.

"I hardly suppose that you intend to entertain us in the yard where every passer-by can see us," replied Mme. Gémozac, considerably piqued.

"I am used to it, and as I have nothing to conceal, it makes no difference to me whether people are watching me or not."

"Very well, mademoiselle. It is plain that you do not desire our company, so there is nothing left for us but to go."

"You misunderstand me entirely, madame. The only reason I do not invite you in is that it is always very painful to me to enter the room in which my father was so cruelly murdered."

"It is a matter of no consequence, especially as I have but little time at my disposal this morning," was the cold answer. "I must therefore take leave of you. When you feel any inclination to come and see us, you will be very cordially received, and my husband bade me remind you that his purse was at your disposal."

Camille, cut to the quick, made a deprecating gesture, which did not escape Julien's keen eyes.

"That is hardly a correct statement of the case," he interposed, quickly. "You are my father's partner, mademoiselle, and any money you may require is, of course, at your disposal. I would gladly give my life to serve you, and I beg that you will tell me all you know about the

wretch you are seeking. You just remarked that he is still in Paris."

"Yes, at least he was last night."

"Did you see him?"

"No, but I am sure of what I say."

"Then you have already entered upon your campaign, I suppose?" said Mme. Gémozac, ironically.

"Yes, madame," was the girl's unhesitating reply.

"You have lost no time, I see, and it seems to me that you can easily dispense with Julien's aid."

"I did not solicit it, and I accepted it only because I am already under such deep obligations to your son that the idea of being still more deeply indebted to him was not distasteful to me. But I should be miserable if I supposed he would expose himself to any danger on my account, or if I thought he would imperil his life by helping me to find my father's murderer."

"Nevertheless, I am more than willing to do so!" exclaimed Julien, earnestly.

On hearing this enthusiastic response Mme. Gémozac lost her temper entirely.

"You are mad," she said, angrily. "I will not have you transform yourself into a detective merely to please mademoiselle."

"I am master of my own actions," replied Julien, coldly, "and I must call your attention to the fact, mother, that this is no place to discuss this subject."

"That is true. Let us go, for I trust you will not compel me to go alone."

"Certainly not, mother, but I hope that Mademoiselle Monistrol will permit me to call again at an early day."

Camille made no reply. She did not wish to offend the mother or wound the son, but she was determined not to yield, even if she were obliged to alienate the wife of her father's generous partner, and refuse the aid of the young man who seemed so eager to serve her.

"Farewell, mademoiselle," said Mme. Gémozac, coldly. "I am sorry to have disturbed you. You are expecting some visitor, doubtless, and it is time that we should give place to him."

"You are mistaken, madame," faltered Camille, blushing deeply.

"I am not mistaken. See, a carriage has just driven up to your gate."

A carriage had indeed stopped in front of the house, and at the window appeared a face which Mlle. Monistrol instantly recognized, but which was instantly withdrawn.

"We are evidently in the gentleman's way," remarked Mme. Gémozac. "Come, my son, we have no further business here."

This time Julien followed his mother without a word, and Camille, deeply humiliated, saw them re-enter their coupé and drive away.

The visitor who had put them to flight had hastily pulled up the glass, and drawn back into a corner of the carriage.

"It is he!" murmured Camille, "and he fears to displease me by showing himself."

She felt no little remorse at having wounded the son and irritated the mother when she could have mentioned the name of her visitor, and even have introduced him to them without blushing. But to explain his visit it would be necessary to divulge the events of the previous night, and she instinctively felt that they would disapprove of her conduct. Moreover, she felt that it would be worse than useless to speak of an expedition which had been so unfortunate in its results.

Then, too, she was overcome with joy at the sight of her preserver. He, perhaps, brought tidings of her unfortunate friends, and she had so many things to say to him.

He waited until the coupé was some distance off before he alighted. Mlle. Monistrol had advanced half way to meet him, and as he approached her, hat in hand, she could better appreciate his personal charms than she had been able to do in the dimly-lighted Avenue de Clichy. He seemed to her now much handsomer than he did the evening before. His exceedingly sympathetic and pleasing face wore a grave and even affectionate expression, and he seemed to be trying to read the thoughts of the young girl whose eyes met his so frankly.

"Excuse my tardiness, mademoiselle," he said gently. "I did not call this morning for fear of disturbing you, for I knew that you would be in great need of rest. And even now, I fear, I came too soon, for you were not alone."

"Madame Gémozac and her son were with me. My father, only the day before his death, associated himself with Monsieur Gémozac in the manufacture of a patent of which he was the inventor, and the young man you just saw came to my aid on the evening of the murder. But I am talking of matters you know nothing about, for last night I could not tell you my story."

"You merely told me that you were hunting for your father's assassin."

"My story is very short and simple. A wretch crept into our house one evening. He sprung upon my father, strangled him and then fled. I pursued him as far as the Place du Trône, where I saw him enter a building in which a company of acrobats were giving an exhibition. I tried to secure his arrest, but no one would listen to me, and I very narrowly escaped being arrested myself. Monsieur Julien Gémozac happened to be present, and he protected me, though he did not know me. When I returned here in company with him, I found my father dead."

"That was terrible! Why didn't you denounce the assassin without loss of time?"

"I lay for several days between life and death, and when I became able to take any action in the matter, it was too late. The acrobat I accused had been examined and released. It was not until yesterday that I succeeded in finding any trace of him—and you know the result of the expedition I attempted—"

"Upon the advice of the persons who accompanied you, I suppose."

"Yes, a man who formerly belonged to the same troupe as this Zig-Zag."

"What a singular name!"

"He has another name, of course, but I have not succeeded in discovering it. The scoundrel fled with the wife of one of his comrades—the same man who furnished me with my information. The poor man had a son, about twelve years of age, whom we took with us, and who disappeared with his father. But pardon me, sir, I have neglected to invite you in."

She turned toward the house, M. de Menestreau accompanying her. In the doorway they met Brigitte, who seemed not a little surprised to see her young mistress in the company of this handsome young man. Camille con-

ducted her preserver straight to the dining-room, where she had not eaten a morsel since the murder.

"It was here that the assassin concealed himself," she remarked.

"How did he gain an entrance?" inquired M. de Menestreau. "Had your servant neglected to lock the door?"

"We had no servant at that time. The one you just saw has been with me only a few days. My father took no precautions against thieves, as we possessed nothing that would be likely to tempt them. But, unfortunately, on that day, we had received twenty thousand francs from Monsieur Gémozac. How the assassin became aware of this fact, I do not know, but he certainly was aware of it. The terrible deed was committed in this way. My father was seated at the table, completing a drawing he was to take to his partner. The curtains near which you are standing were closed as they are now. Suddenly I saw a hand appear between the two portières and part them."

"Like this," said M. de Menestreau, stepping forward.

As he spoke he removed his glove and parted the curtains with his bare hand, a slender white hand—an aristocratic hand with taper fingers and almond-shaped nails, the exact opposite of the frightful claw-like hands that had so often haunted Camille in her dreams.

"Yes," replied Mlle. Monistrol, "and that hand was all I could see of the murderer's person."

"What! you would not recognize his face if you should see it again?"

"No, as he sprung upon my father he overturned the lamp. It went out, and—"

"Then how can you hope to find him?"

"He had the hands of a gorilla, and I should only have to see them to say with certainty: This is the man!"

"Yes, that is, indeed, a peculiarity which may be of service to us—if we should be fortunate enough to find the culprit."

"You doubt it, then?"

"I fear the expedition of last night may have caused him to decamp—that is, if he was really an occupant of the old house you spoke of."

"No matter; my friends are there. I can not abandon them to their fate."

"I have come to take you there. I would have gone alone, but I did not know exactly where to look for the house. You must show me the way to it, and we will talk the matter over, and see what it is best to do."

"Thanks. I expected no less of you, and I am ready to accompany you."

"Then the same carriage that brought me here can take us to the Porte Saint-Ouen. From that point we will proceed on foot. I will conduct you to the place where I met you last night. The house can not be far from there. I am rejoiced to see that you have enough confidence in me to be willing to accept me as a *compagnon de voyage.*"

"Gladly. How could I possibly doubt one who saved my life?"

"And you feel quite sure that no one will reproach you for the step you are taking?"

"Who would venture to do that? Now I have lost my father, I am alone in the world, and no one has any right to control my actions."

"What, have you no guardian?"

"No; if I had, it would be Monsieur Gémozac, my poor father's partner. He is my guardian to all intents and purposes, as my entire property is in his hands. He is to furnish the necessary money for the manufacture and introduction of the patent which is my sole inheritance, and he will take charge of my income for me."

"All this makes it the more necessary that you should have a guardian to watch over your interests. But pardon me, mademoiselle, for thus meddling with your affairs. The interest I feel in you is my only excuse."

"Now, shall we not start out upon our expedition without further delay?"

Camille eagerly acquiesced.

A few moments afterward, as she took her seat in the carriage, she noticed a large bundle on the floor at her feet.

"I am prepared for any emergency, you see," remarked her new friend. "I may be obliged to explore the cave or cellar, so I have taken the precaution to provide myself

with a rope and a few implements which may prove of service."

"I thank you most sincerely, sir," replied Camille, "but remember that I am to accompany you wherever you go."

"I have no objection to your doing so, provided you do not expose yourself to unnecessary danger."

"But you do not hesitate to imperil your life, though you have no loved one to avenge."

"I adore adventure, and danger always has an irresistible charm for me. Still, I must confess that it is chiefly sympathy for you that prompts me. You inspire me with a feeling I can scarcely define. You would laugh at me, if I should tell you that I fell in love with you when I met you in an apprentice's blouse on the Plaine Saint-Denis; and I do not believe in love at first sight any more than you do. But a profound interest and regard would very naturally spring from circumstances like those that brought us together. You are alone in the world, and so am I. I think, too, that we are congenial in character. Hence it is only natural that we should understand each other thoroughly, even on a short acquaintance; and it was doubtless fore-ordained that we were to meet face to face some day. But all this sounds very like a declaration of love. That would be premature, however, and I assure you that you are not to regard it in such a light."

"I see that you are one of the most frank and generous of men," said Mlle. Monistrol, deeply touched.

"Still, if I should ever venture upon a declaration of love, I should have an excellent excuse for making it toyou in person," continued George de Menestreau, gayly, "for I should not know who else to apply to, as you have no father, mother or guardian. For want of some one better I should be obliged to appeal to Monsieur Gémozac, and that gentleman would be sure to think that I was after your fortune."

"I do not know whether he would impute such improbable sentiments to you or not," interrupted Mlle. Monistrol, "but I am not dependent upon Monsieur Gémozac, and if I ever marry, I shall choose my husband myself. But before choosing him, I should have to know him thoroughly—"

"While you do not know me at all. All I ask, however,

is that after this expedition—whatever the result of it may be—you will not insist that our acquaintance shall terminate."

"I should be very sorry if it did," replied Camille, quickly. "You will ever be welcome at my house. Besides, how could I dispense with your assistance? It is not likely that we shall succeed in finding Zig-Zag to-day, and I have no one else to aid me in discovering him."

"Monsieur Gémozac has been informed of your plans, I presume?"

"Yes, but he disapproves them."

"And he is too old to be of much service to you. But how about his son—the young man I saw in your garden when I drove up?"

"He approves them, or at least he pretends to approve them; but, unfortunately, he is incapable of rendering me any effectual aid. Just now, for instance, he was advising the employment of detectives—"

"Who would do nothing at all. They had the culprit in their custody once, and they released him. They can not be depended upon; that is evident. We will do better than they have done, mademoiselle, you may rest assured of that."

The conversation flagged after this. In about a quarter of an hour Camille and her companion reached the Porte Saint-Ouen, where they alighted, and then they walked together over the same road they had traversed the night before.

From the place of their first meeting, the brick house was distinctly visible on the plain, only a few hundred yards from the Route de la Révolte, and Mlle. Monistrol pointed it out to George de Menestreau.

"It is not so far from the fortifications as I supposed," he remarked, "and I am glad to see that there are no houses near it, for that being the case, there will be no one to disturb us."

They soon reached the dilapidated front of the house, and Camille had no difficulty in pointing out the window at which Amanda had appeared. The shutters were still open, hence it seemed more than probable that the former inmates of the house had lost no time in making their escape with their dog.

"I would suggest that we examine the house on all

sides, mademoiselle," said M. de Menestreau. "There may be another door by which the wretches made their escape, and by which we can enter the house without danger of breaking our necks."

They found the opposite side of the house even more dilapidated. The wall was full of large holes, and the portions of it that were still standing seemed likely to give way at any moment. Indeed, the very bricks of which it was composed seemed to have been calcined by heat and loosened by an explosion.

"I have it!" exclaimed George. "This building was once used for the manufacture of fireworks, and one fine day some of the combustibles took fire, and blew the whole establishment up. The accident must have occurred a long time ago, for plants are growing in the crevices of the wall, and the ruins have since served as a place of refuge for all the scoundrels in the neighborhood. Ah! here is another door, at the foot of an exceedingly unsafe looking staircase."

"It is strong enough to hold us, however," said Camille, darting forward before her companion had time to prevent it.

He was obliged to follow her, and he reached the large empty room to which the stairs led almost at the same moment that she did.

"The wretches have been here, evidently," said the young man, pointing to a half burnt candle that was lying on the floor.

"Yes," replied Camille, "and there is the rope, and the halter that served as a muzzle for the dog."

"The wretches must have taken him with them. So much the better! He will perhaps help us to find them again. What surprises me most, is that they did not pursue you after making way with your companions."

"But we must now try to ascertain what became of their victims, and this is not the place to look for them."

They descended the stairs together, and then perceived for the first time that the hall extended from one side of the house to the other.

In exploring this dark and treacherous passage, the floor of which had given way in many places, it was natural for M. de Menestreau to go first. He even tried to prevent Mlle. Monistrol from following him, but in

vain. They proceeded very cautiously, however, testing the floor carefully at every step.

"I see the opening," George remarked, after a little. "It is time for me to light my lantern and explore the depths of this pit."

He opened his bundle and took from it a rope, and also a lantern, which he proceeded to light, after which he continued his slow advance toward the opening, still closely followed by Camille.

"Why, here is a ladder!" he exclaimed, on reaching the edge of the opening.

There was indeed a ladder, two rounds of which projected above the floor, and the other end of which must rest upon the bottom of the cellar.

"I hope you are not going down," said Camille, hastily.

"I must take a look into the pit first. I shall then know what it is best to do," replied the young man.

He fastened the lantern to one end of the rope, and then slowly lowered it into the opening.

"Georget!" called Mlle. Monistrol, leaning over the edge of the pit.

There was no response.

"They are dead," she whispered, drawing closer to her new friend.

"We have good reason to fear that they are, for the lantern has not yet touched bottom, and I have lowered at least twelve feet of rope. Ah, it touches bottom at last. A fall of fifteen or sixteen feet is quite enough to kill a man, to say nothing of a child. If your friends had survived the fall, they would have availed themselves of the ladder; that is, unless Zig-Zag brought it here afterward in order to descend and dispatch them. I must go down and satisfy myself upon this point, for though I have been moving my lantern about down there, I can see nothing."

"I will go down with you," said Camille.

"Pray do not think of such a thing, mademoiselle. You could not descend the ladder; besides, if the bodies of your unfortunate friends are there, how could you endure the sight?"

Camille could not repress a shudder at the thought.

"Moreover, we must be prepared for any possible contingency," continued M. de Menestreau. "What if Zig-

Zag should be hiding somewhere about here, and should take it into his head to cut off our retreat by taking away the ladder? It would be far better for you to remain here, so you can warn me if you hear any suspicious sound."

"But what if the wretch should be hiding in the cellar, and should attack you as soon as you reach the bottom of the ladder?"

"He would meet with a warm reception. I have a six-shooter in my pocket, and I would blow his brains out before he had a chance to touch me."

As he spoke, the young man placed his foot on the topmost round of the ladder, and began the descent, swinging the lantern back and forth in front of him.

A prey to the most poignant anxiety, Camille watched the light which grew more and more dim in proportion as M. de Menestreau descended lower and lower.

At last the voice of the brave explorer reached her, clear and distinct.

"I have reached the bottom, and have found nothing as yet. I am going to make the tour of the cellar. Don't be alarmed if you lose sight of my lantern. I shall not be gone long."

The light suddenly disappeared, and though the eclipse had been announced, it increased Mlle. Monistrol's terror tenfold.

It seemed to her that she would never see again her brave preserver, the only friend she had left in the world.

She waited a minute—five minutes, then, unable to endure the suspense any longer, she called M. de Menestreau by name.

The call remained unanswered, and the light did not reappear. Despair seized her.

"He is dead," she moaned; "Zig-Zag was lying in wait for him below. Zig-Zag has killed him. He kills all whom I love. Ah, well, let him kill me, too!"

And without pausing to reflect, she started to descend into the depths from which no one had ever returned.

Very fortunately Mlle. Monistrol did not have time to carry this senseless project into execution, for she had scarcely placed her foot upon the first round of the ladder before a friendly voice called out from below:

"Here I am, mademoiselle."

Never did a soldier lost among the wilds of Africa hear the bugle of the company he had been seeking for hours with greater delight

Camille stepped back upon the rickety floor of the passage, then, turning to look down, saw beneath her M. de Menestreau slowly ascending the ladder with his lantern.

She felt almost tempted to throw her arms about his neck when he reached the top, a little out of breath, but safe and sound.

"Well?" she asked, eagerly.

"There is no one there. I saw nothing of your friends, and Zig-Zag must be a long way off by this time."

"Thank Heaven! I was terribly frightened. I could not see your light, and you did not answer when I called you."

"Because I did not hear you. The cellar is very large, and I wished to explore it carefully to satisfy myself that there is no other place of egress. One can enter it and leave it only by this trap-door. It has been used only as a receptacle for coal, probably, as there are still some piles of coal dust there."

"But what has become of Courapied and his son? Can it be that Zig-Zag buried them where they fell?"

"The same idea occurred to me, but I examined the ground carefully, and satisfied myself that it had not been disturbed."

"They may have made their escape by the ladder. Still, that is hardly probable, for they must have been seriously, if not fatally, injured by their fall."

"No, the pile of coal dust may have broken their fall, and it would not surprise me to find that they did make use of the ladder to escape from the cellar."

"I can not believe that the scoundrels who set this trap for them would have allowed them to make their escape."

"I will tell you presently how I explain their mysterious disappearance. But there is nothing more for us to do here, so let us go."

Mlle. Monistrol made no objection. The idea of criticising her preserver's acts or refusing to fellow his advice, did not once occur to her.

They went through the house again before returning to the Porte Saint-Ouen by the same road that had brought them there.

Camille anxiously waited for M. de Menestreau to speak. She dared not question him.

"Mademoiselle," he said, suddenly, "I fear I shall wound you by destroying a cherished illusion. You asked me, just now, what could have become of your friends? My opinion is that they have fled with Zig-Zag, and that they were in league with him to entice you to this place."

"In league with him! Impossible! Courapied loathes the cowardly scoundrel who stole his wife from him, and Georget hates the step-mother who always treated him with the utmost cruelty."

"Nevertheless, I am still of the opinion that all the scoundrels had combined against you. Your two guides threw themselves boldly into the pit, knowing full well that they would fall upon a pile of coal dust and sustain no injury. They expected you would follow them, and, in this way, place yourself completely at their mercy."

"But they could have killed me just as easily before I reached the house."

"But not with impunity. Your body would have been found, an investigation would have followed, and suspicion would perhaps have fallen on your father's murderer. Zig-Zag would not care to have the police set upon his track a second time. He would greatly have preferred to strangle you in the cellar, or to shut you up there and allow you to perish of starvation. To do this last he would only have been obliged to draw up the ladder by which his accomplices made their escape, and close the trap-door, for this house has been abandoned for years. The scheme was a very clever one, and it is a miracle that you escaped. Do you know why they did not pursue you? Simply because they thought you had fallen into the cellar, and they hastened there first.

Camille hung her head, but she could not make up her mind to condemn her friends.

"It is evident that Courapied and his son did not remain in the cellar," continued M. de Menestreau, "consequently, some one must have helped them out. In that case, how does it happen that you have seen nothing of them since? Had they been friends of yours, they would have gone straight to your house. But they have taken good care not to do that; hence they must be enemies, and everything seems to indicate that they have

decamped with the other bandits. There is nothing to prove that they will not repeat their efforts, however. Zig-Zag knows now that you have sworn to pursue him to the death, and he must be equally determined to get rid of you. We have seen what he is capable of. He will not accept his defeat; on the contrary, he will set another trap for you. Indeed, he may attack you at night in your lonely home, into which you have been so imprudent as to admit his accomplices."

"What must I do?" asked the girl. "Advise me, sir; you to whom I am indebted for my life."

"I advise you to move immediately—to rent some rooms in a more thickly settled part of the town, and hire a trusty servant. I, myself, will attend to all these matters for you, if you desire it."

"Madame Gémozac made me the same offer—and I declined it."

"Accept it, mademoiselle. Do not quarrel with a family whose head holds your fortune in his hands. When you are installed in suitable quarters, abandon dangerous expeditions, and leave to me the task of ferreting out your father's murderer."

"How can you identify him? You have never seen him."

"And you saw only his hands, which you have described to me, so I know as much about him as you do. I also have one great advantage over you: Zig-Zag does not know me. Will you give me full authority to act in your stead? My efforts shall not prove unavailing, I promise you."

Camille being evidently in doubt as to what to reply, George de Menestreau added:

"Take time to reflect, mademoiselle. I do not propose to accompany you back to the Boulevard Voltaire. With your permission, I will escort you to the carriage, and at four o'clock to-morrow afternoon I will do myself the honor to call and submit to you some plans that I can not, or rather dare not, propose here."

"I shall expect you, sir," replied Mlle. Monistrol, greatly agitated, but exceedingly anxious to know her new friend's meaning.

CHAPTER VII.

A WEEK has elapsed, and there is a marked change in the situation.

Camille Monistrol still thinks of avenging her father, but she also thinks a great deal about George de Menestreau, who has declared his love, and is now an avowed suitor for her hand.

Julien Gémozac has also declared his passion, in spite of his mother's counsels, but has obtained only evasive replies from Mlle. Monistrol. He suspects that he has a rival, though he has never met him at the young lady's house, for he dares to present himself there only at such hours as she appoints, and is obliged to content himself with serving as an intermediary between his father and Camille.

Alfred de Fresnay has succeeded in overcoming the scruples of the Countess de Lugos, and that lady is now comfortably established in the charming little house on the Rue Mozart, where she has a constant and apparently not unwelcome visitor in the person of her handsome landlord.

Fresnay is beginning to suspect that his charmer was born at Batignolles or Belleville, but these suspicions do not trouble him in the least. Olga is still in the employ of Mme. de Lugos, and serves her mistress with exemplary zeal and fidelity. Fresnay has tried more than once to learn through her something about the past of this pretended countess, but Olga maintains a determined silence, and all the liberal gratuities he bestows upon her fail to unloose her tongue.

The denouement was much nearer than he suspected, however.

One charming spring morning the baron drove briskly down the Rue Mozart at a much earlier hour than he usually selected for his visits to the eccentric countess. He generally found the lady on the terrace or at the bay-window overlooking the street, but on this particular occasion she was not at her post. He rang several times, but the summons remaining unanswered he involuntarily placed his hand on the knob. It yielded to his touch,

and almost before he knew it he found himself in the hall where Olga was usually waiting to receive him.

Hearing the sound of voices in the salon, Alfred walked straight to it, and drew aside the heavy portière that separated it from the hall. A sight for which he was totally unprepared greeted his eyes.

The salon was divided into two apartments by folding doors, which had been opened to their widest extent. In the room opening into the hall, and directly in front of Alfred, though with her back toward him, sat Olga before a small lacquer table strewn with cards, telling her own fortune or that of her mistress, whom Fresnay could not see, or rather, whom he could see only at intervals, for she suddenly appeared before him, six feet above the floor, only to instantly disappear again, borne back by the steady swaying of a trapeze upon which she was standing, in complete acrobatic array—flesh-colored tights, short, pink satin skirt, satin slippers, and unbound hair floating down upon her bare shoulders.

"She must have been a circus-performer," thought Fresnay. "I always suspected something of the kind."

To behold one's lady-love perched upon the bar of a trapeze is a pleasure vouchsafed to but few mortals, and our eccentric friend experienced no little satisfaction as he gazed upon this beautiful vision as it moved swiftly to and fro through the air, like a bird, or the pendulum of a clock.

So he took good care not to interrupt the exhibition, particularly as Olga was talking quite loud, and he was not sorry to have an opportunity to hear what she was saying to the countess.

"Here is the Knave of Hearts again!" exclaimed the maid. "It is a good card, but it turns up too often."

"Impossible! It can not appear too often," replied Mme. de Lugos, as she swung merrily to and fro.

"We have seen him once to-day, and it would never do for him to meet the King of Clubs."

"I am getting tired of the King of Clubs."

"Clubs mean money. But here is a troublesome Queen of Diamonds. There seems likely to be trouble on account of a woman."

"Any one who attempts to interfere with me will have

a hard time of it," replied the countess, from her airy perch. "But I don't fear any rival."

"Look! here comes the nine of spades, the very worst card in the whole pack. I tell you, everything is going to end badly."

"Nonsense! You bore me with your predictions. Go and prepare my bath. It is time I began to dress. The baron will be here presently."

"And he must not find himself face to face with the Knave of Hearts."

"Ah! so I am the King of Clubs," Fresnay said to himself.

"Go," continued the countess, "I will be up in about five minutes, and then you can come down and get the trapeze and the ropes."

Olga gathered up her cards, rose and turned toward the door, while her noble mistress executed what gymnasts call a *retablissement* on the horizontal bar.

Fresnay had the presence of mind to conceal himself in the folds of the curtain, and he did it so skillfully that Olga passed him without seeing him.

A more deeply enamored lover would have followed her at a little distance, to satisfy himself that the Knave of Hearts was not concealed somewhere about the house; but Fresnay was not jealous, and he could not resist the temptation to play a joke upon Mme. de Lugos.

So he stole into the room on tiptoe, and found her still swinging merrily to and fro on her trapeze.

"Good-morning, countess," he said, in his blandest tones.

She sprung up quickly, jumped to the floor, and stood defiantly before him, with her arms folded upon her breast.

"How did you get in?" she asked, curtly.

"By the door; it was open."

"I should not have supposed that you would stoop to play the spy upon me."

"Nothing could have been further from my intentions. I called a little earlier than usual, to invite you to take a drive in the Bois; and after ringing several times in vain, I took the liberty of trying the door, and finding it unlocked, I ventured in. I can not say I regret it, as I have surprised you in a costume that becomes you marvelously,

and discover that you are the possessor of a talent to which you have never alluded."

"I have often told you that I was an admirer of all kinds of athletic sports. My father gave me my first lessons when I was scarcely seven years old. But there is a matter about which I want to speak to you. I do not find Parisian life as pleasant as I anticipated. On the contrary, I am very lonely here, and I wish you would introduce me to some of your friends, beginning with the gentleman I saw with you at the Café des Ambassadeurs."

"Gémozac!" exclaimed Fresnay; "you will find his society anything but entertaning, I assure you."

"But why?" inquired the countess. "I was very much pleased with him the evening I met him, and I don't see why you have not brought him to call on me, unless, perhaps, you are jealous of him."

"On the contrary, I should be delighted to bring him; but there is no doing anything with the fellow. He is in love, and, what is worse, he longs to marry the object of his affections."

"With whom is he so deeply infatuated?"

"With an orphan."

"The daughter of Monistrol, the inventor, I suppose. You spoke of her the evening I met you at the café."

"What a memory you have!"

"I never forget anything you say, you see. I am not like you, who forget everything you promise me. Did you not promise to keep me posted in regard to the movements of your friend, Gémozac? and yet, during all the time I have been living on the Rue Mozart you have not once mentioned his name."

"Had I suspected that his love affairs would have interested you, I would have filled your ears with them."

"How could I possibly help feeling an interest in an unfortunate girl and in your most intimate friend?"

"Neither of them need your pity, I assure you. The girl will have several millions, and though she does not reciprocate Julien's passion, he has the wherewithal to console himself, for he will be even richer than she is. You will say, perhaps, that money does not give happiness, but I assure you that it contributes a great deal toward it; and you must admit that I am right."

"Then Mademoiselle Monistrol does not return the young gentleman's love?"

"It would seem not."

"He is very good looking."

"Yes, but love, you know, comes, or does not come, as the case may be. Besides, there is no accounting for tastes."

"But how is Mademoiselle Monistrol progressing in her efforts to discover her father's assassin? If I were in Monsieur Gémozac's place, I would have found him long before this."

"Very possibly. You have experience, and boldness, and tact, while poor Julien is not the shrewdest person in the world. Would you believe it, he has applied to a private detective agency for assistance, and is paying large amounts to scoundrels who pretend to be searching for Zig-Zag, but who really spend their time in drinking and carousing at my artless friend's expense? Still, Julien does not despair. Hope on, hope ever, is his motto. In spite of his mother's protests, he goes to the Boulevard Voltaire every day, and when his lady-love refuses to see him, he spends whole hours in gazing at the house. One of these evenings he will go and play the guitar under his charmer's window, I expect. And the worst of it all is that he has a rival."

"A rival?"

"Yes, whom she receives on the sly, for though Julien has been watching, he has not yet succeeded in getting a glimpse of him. But how deeply this seems to interest you!" he added, noting the flush and the expression of agitation that had suddenly appeared upon his companion's face.

"Yes, I am naturally inquisitive, and mysteries always have a great charm for me. I think I could give Mademoiselle Monistrol some good advice if I knew her."

"She is not likely to cross your path, so forget the poor girl, and go and dress for a drive in the Bois. There must be a crowd there this fine morning.

"Are you particularly anxious to go to the Bois?" inquired the countess, suddenly regaining her wonted indifference of manner.

"No, but there is no where else to go. Besides, if we dine at—"

"It is too early to think of dinner now. Why can't we pay Mademoiselle Monistrol a visit instead?"

"Pay Mademoiselle Monistrol a visit?" repeated Fresnay. "And on what pretext, pray? You are not acquainted with her, and she is not even aware of your existence."

"What difference does that make?" replied the countess, coldly. "You can introduce me to her."

"A fine recommendation an introduction from me would be! I saw her once, and only for a few moments; and if she hasn't forgotten me entirely she hasn't a very pleasant recollection of me, for I left her rather unceremoniously the evening her father was murdered. Gémozac hasn't forgiven me for it yet, and he must have complained of me to the young lady."

"Then this will be an excellent opportunity to make your excuses. I will intercede for you, and she will forgive you, I am sure."

"You are mad. There is no possible pretext under which I could take the Countess de Lugos to Mademoiselle Monistrol's house."

"Very well. So you consider me unworthy to be received into the society of your friend?"

This question was so entirely unexpected that Fresnay did not know what to say in reply.

"So you refuse to do what I ask?" continued the countess, angrily. "It is the first time, and it shall be the last. Out of my way, if you please."

And waving Fresnay aside, the decendant of the Magyars seized the trapeze, climbed upon the bar, and began to perform the most dangerous and difficult feats.

"Charming!" said Alfred, laughing heartily. "You ought to make your début at the summer circus."

"Stand aside, if you don't want the the bar to break your head. I won't be responsible for the damages."

"So you refuse to accompany me to the Bois?"

"Most decidedly."

"Farewell, then, until to-morrow, most adorable countess. Don't leave your perch. Olga will escort me to my carriage."

"Olga! I forbid you to stir."

Poor Olga, who had just come in to inform her mistress that her bath was in readiness, found herself in a most

uncomfortable position. She finally decided to beat a retreat into the next room, but as Fresnay passed her, he managed to whisper:

"Ten louis for you, if you come to see me to-morrow morning. You can easily find time before your mistress is up."

The maid answered neither yes or no, and Fresnay hurried out of the house.

"To the club!" he said to his coachman as he re-entered his carriage.

The club to which Alfred and Julien belonged, was not one of the most aristocratic in the city, nor was it one of those gambling-houses into which one can secure admission as readily as into an inn; but a member was at liberty to invite a friend to dine with them, of course, and this guest was at liberty to remain until the next morning, and even to take a hand in any of the games of cards.

A dangerous practice this, and one there had been much talk of suppressing, but as no serious trouble had yet arisen, the committee had taken no action on the subject thus far.

Consequently, Fresnay on entering the room devoted to baccarat, was not much surprised to see two or three new faces at the table.

He had not come to watch the players, however, but to find Julien Gémozac, and he failed to see him for the very good reason that Julien—who was keeping the bank—was sitting with his back to the door. Alfred accordingly turned to leave the room. As he did so, he was accosted by an acquaintance with whom he had long been on familiar, though not intimate terms.

Such friendships are common in Paris. Men meet on the boulevard, at the club, at the restaurant or at the houses of fashionable ladies; but they do not visit each other, and one of them may disappear any fine morning without the other troubling himself in the least as to what has become of him.

"How is the game progressing?" inquired Fresnay of this acquaintance, whose name was Daubrac.

"About as usual. The heavy players have not put in an appearance yet, and the others have suffered so much of late that they are a little shy. It is our friend Gémozac who is acting as banker now in a modest way."

"That is so. I see him now. Is he winning?"

"I think so, for I hear the players grumbling."

"Then I will wait until he has finished; I don't want to spoil his luck. But do you know that man?" he added, designating a gentleman who had just approached the table and thrown a bank-note upon it, for it seemed to Fresnay that this new player strongly resembled M. Tergowitz, the Countess de Lugos's compatriot."

"No, it is the first time I have ever seen him here," Daubrac replied, after a prolonged stare at the new-comer. "I think he must be the invited guest of some member."

"I am anxious to know who brought him here, and his name."

"That would not be a difficult matter. His name and that of his entertainer must be on the dinner list. I will go and see; I don't particularly fancy his face."

"Come back and give me the benefit of your researches," said Fresnay, stepping back to the card-table.

He stationed himself opposite the person who had so deeply interested him, and began to examine him with the closest attention. The stranger was still young, tall, dark-complexioned and elegantly formed, while his features resembled in a marked degree those of the Hungarian whom Fresnay had seen talking with the pretended Countess de Lugos at the Café des Ambassadeurs.

It soon became evident that this gentleman was an extremely lucky one. He had attacked the bank with a five-hundred franc note, and meeting with success in this venture, he doubled his stakes, and soon had four thousand francs in front of him.

"Julien had better mind what he is about," muttered Alfred. "If this man is the Countess Stepanette's Hungarian, he is not to be trusted. He is not cheating now, because he is not dealing the cards, but just wait until he gets hold of them. I must warn that simpleton of a Julien."

He began to maneuver in such a way as to get nearer to his friend to whom he could not, with propriety, make signs from a distance.

On his way to the banker, he was stopped by Daubrac, who whispered:

"He is a Monsieur Tergowitz, and he was invited here by that Polish major with an unpronounceable name."

"Good! I am satisfied now," growled Fresnay.

He reached Gémozac, and tapped him on the shoulder just as the Hungarian again came off victorious.

Julien turned, and, seeing his friend, rose, saying:

"I will relinquish my place to any one who wants it."

The players murmured a little, but they could not compel Gémozac to go on, so after a short silence, as some one suggested that the bank should be put up at auction, the stranger said, quietly:

"I will take it at a thousand louis."

This was the height of assurance for a bird of passage, who was not even a member of the club; but no protest was made, for each one hoped to retrieve his losses through this victor who risked such a large amount so carelessly.

Fresnay instantly took possession of Gémozac, and dragged him off into one corner of the room.

"Do you know who just won your money?"

"No; nor do I care. I play only to divert my mind, and I did not even look at the person who cleaned out my pockets for me."

"Well, look at him now. Do you notice a resemblance to any one?"

"It seems to me I have seen him somewhere before, but—"

"I'll tell you where you have seen him. Do you remember the noble foreigner you caught making signs to my Countess de Lugos, the other evening, at the Café des Ambassadeurs?"

"Very well. This man does look very much like him; that's a fact."

"I am almost certain that they are one and the same person. I am satisfied, too, on another point. My charmer has deceived me in regard to this same personage. She assured me that he had returned home. But I find him here, and I am almost sure that he was at her house a little while ago."

"I would have nothing more to do with that pretended countess, if I were in your place. I am satified that she is an adventuress of the very worst kind."

"I think I shall keep away from her hereafter, though I find her very amusing; but I shall probably astonish you very much by telling you that she takes a great interest in you—and in a friend of yours."

"What do you mean?"

"That I have just had a real quarrel with the headstrong creature, because she wished to compel me to introduce her to Mademoiselle Monistrol."

"That was certainly the height of impudence on her part. I can not conceive how she ever even heard of Mademoiselle Monistrol."

"You forget that, on the evening we met her first, I alluded to the murder of Mademoiselle Monistrol's father. Our conversation must have made a deep impression upon her, for she refers to it constantly, so constantly, indeed, that I am almost inclined to believe that she knows the perpetrator of the crime. If it was really the acrobat who figured at the Gingerbread Fair who did the deed, it would not surprise me if she has met him in her travels, for I suspect that she is a member of the same profession. I just caught her executing all sorts of dangerous feats upon a trapeze. I think she must have belonged to a circus troupe."

"I am glad to see that you no longer mistake her for a real countess," said Gémozac, ironically. "Still, I don't believe that she is in any way connected with the scoundrel of whom I am in search."

"What if I should discover that this handsome Monsieur Tergowitz is no other than Zig-Zag himself?"

"Notice his hands."

"I confess that they are white, and that the hooked thumb is wanting. He uses them with wonderful dexterity, however. See how the cards slip through his fingers, and they are just what he wants, for see, he gathers up the entire stakes. The Polish major who invited him here to dinner must have brought a professional gambler into our midst."

"Never mind these conjectures. Do me the favor to tell me what you said to the Hungarian, when she had the audacity to ask you to take her to see Mademoiselle Monistrol."

"I refused, of course, and she became terribly angry; whereupon, I left her, as I am not fond of scenes. But her request furnished me with food for reflection. There is some mystery here, and it will be solved to-morrow morning, for Stepanette's maid is coming to call on me. A couple of hundred francs will unloose her tongue and

nduce her to tell me all I want to know about her mistress, and perhaps about Monsieur Tergowitz as well."

CHAPTER VIII.

In the meantime, Courapied and his son were passing through a trying ordeal a long way from the Boulevard Voltaire.

They were not dead, as Camille had too credulously believed, nor had they rejoined Zig-Zag, as M. de Menestreau had asserted.

They were the inmates of a most gloomy and uncomfortable prison, and they had not the slightest idea how they came there, although they distinctly remembered their fall, and the incidents that had preceded it.

After a more or less protracted period of insensibility, they had staggered to their feet, muddy and bruised, but with no bones broken.

Their feet were on bare ground, their outstretched hands encountered walls from which the dampness was slowly oozing, and not the slightest ray of light made its way into their dungeon.

Everything seemed to indicate that they were buried alive, and destined to perish of starvation.

The father and son, after exchanging a few words of condolence, attempted to explore their prison.

This was no easy matter without a light, but they finally discovered that this subterranean dungeon was a narrow passage, so low that Courapied could reach the ceiling by standing on tiptoe with his arm uplifted.

They also discovered that it was not empty, but lined on either side with barrels and hogsheads, and numerous other articles whose nature they were unable to discover during this first hasty examination.

Evidently this was not the place into which they had fallen on dashing into the corridor in pursuit of Vigoureux. A fall of six or seven feet would not have rendered them insensible, consequently they must have been brought here before they regained consciousness, with the amiable intention of leaving them here to die by inches.

Only Zig-Zag and his accomplice, Amanda, could have

done this, and if they had refrained from dispatching their victims, it was only because they felt absolutely certain that their victims could not escape.

Courapied had certainly never heard the story of Ugolino, who was reduced to devouring his own children, but he realized the terrible fate that awaited him and his son, and bitterly regretted the part he had taken in this disastrous expedition.

The sole hope that remained was that the young girl had escaped from the assassins lurking in the brick house, and that she would have courage to return with members of the police force to release her more unfortunate friends.

But this barely possible deliverance might be delayed, and in the meantime they must have food.

The prisoners were not hungry as yet, for Brigitte had treated them to an excellent and bountiful dinner just before they started out; but in a few hours this repast, which seemed likely to be their last, would be digested, and their hunger would return. How should they satisfy it? For some time poverty had familiarized them with fasting, but one can not fast indefinitely, and death follows long-continued abstinence.

They already began to suffer another torture, for to live in utter darkness is terrible. Moreover, in this case, it increased their danger not a little, for they could not see where they were going, and by walking about haphazard, they ran a great risk of falling into another pit.

Despair took possession of Courapied's heart, and throwing himself on the ground, and drawing his son to him, he awaited the approach of death. At last he fell into a heavy slumber, which was more like a stupor than sleep, and which Georget did not disturb. He was wide awake himself, so while his father slept, he racked his brain to devise a means of escaping from their prison.

At his age, one is not easily discouraged, and something whispered to him that his life was not to end thus; so he began to review what had happened, and to weigh the chances of safety that remained.

In the first place, where were they? This house had so many subterranean passages and rooms that it must be the habitual resort of a band of thieves or counterfeiters. The pit into which they had first fallen must be on the other side of the wall, but where was the connecting door?

They had been brought into this dungeon; and as there was a way in, there must be a way out of it. Moreover, had their captors intended to kill them, they would have done it before now; so all hope was not at an end.

Georget had little hope of succor from without. Mlle. Monistrol, herself, would be likely to think twice before repeating an attempt that had so nearly cost her her life, even admitting that she was still alive; hence, Georget would probably be obliged to depend entirely upon himself, for he feared that excitement and his fall had affected his father's brain a little.

The great difficulty was the darkness and the physical suffering it caused him, for all sorts of spots danced before his eyes, and it sometimes seemed to him that there was a crushing weight upon his eye-balls.

What would he not have given for a candle and a box of matches?

Suddenly it occurred to him that while roaming about the Place du Trône that morning, in search of fragments of gingerbread, he had found a few matches which he picked up to carry to his father, who had no means of lighting his pipe. The presence of Mlle. Monistrol had prevented him from giving them to his parent, but he had changed his clothing since, so he was not sure that they were still in his pocket. And even if he had transferred them from one garment to another, was it not more than likely that they had dropped out when he fell into the cellar?

He fumbled in his pockets, his heart beating all the while with indescribable anxiety, for he felt that his life depended upon finding them.

Soon he uttered an exclamation of joy that did not arouse Courapied however.

The matches were there.

Georget would not have exchanged them for diamonds or pearls, as he drew them carefully from his pocket.

But his joy was of short duration for, on counting them, he found that he had only nine.

With this slender stock he could hardly hope to discover the outlet of this dungeon; and in any case, he must hoard them with the utmost care, for so many matches burned were so many chances of salvation lost.

And would they burn, even if he should decide to use

them? Might not the dampness of the cellar have so injured them as to prevent them from taking fire?

He passed his finger lightly over the end of one of them, and had the pleasure of seeing a faint phosphorescent light. Still, a match burns only a few seconds, and then leaves one again in darkness, unless one has a lamp or a candle; so, though Georget had little hope of finding either of these, he said to himself that the hogsheads he had touched must have been placed there by some one, and that person might have left a bit of candle there.

The chance of discovering this scrap was well worth the sacrifice of a match; but where should he scratch this match. The walls were damp, and the soles of Georget's shoes were wet, so he decided to try the barrels. He satisfied himself that the wood of the first one with which he came in contact was not wet; then struck his match quickly upon a stave that seemed a little less smooth than the others.

The phosphorous emitted a faint bluish gleam, which was followed by the fizz of burning sulphur.

Georget experienced a feeling of delight akin to that of a shipwrecked sailor who suddenly beholds a light-house shining before him, and he instantly profited by the opportunity to cast a hasty glance at the objects around him.

Fortunately, the first thing upon which his eyes fell was a large lantern, standing on a hogshead near by. He feared it was empty, but, on opening it, found that it contained a long candle, which he lost no time in lighting.

"Saved!" he murmured.

Then he ran to his father, and shook him violently; whereupon Courapied sprung to his feet with all the alacrity of a man who feels that he must defend his life without an instant's delay.

Seeing his father double up his fists in a threatening manner, Georget said, soothingly·

"Don't be afraid, father; it is I."

"You! I did not know you. Your face is as black as a negro's."

"And so is yours. You look like a coal-heaver."

"Oh, I see how it is. We must have fallen into a pile of coal-dust."

"There is none in this passage; so we have proof that

we were orought here. But here is a lantern to assist us in finding our way out."

"We have not a moment to lose, for the candle will not last long," Courapied replied.

They were only a few steps from the wall that bordered the unencumbered side of the passage, but though they examined it carefully, they saw no sign of any door. As they passed along they noticed that the casks and hogsheads that lined the other side of the passage were all methodically arranged and provided with spigots. A little further on, they again came to the pile over which they had stumbled in the darkness, and saw that it was composed of canvas-covered hams.

They went on until they reached a place where the passage divided. Not knowing which to choose, they turned to the right, but soon encountered an unexpected obstacle in the shape of a deep excavation, into which they would certainly have fallen had it not been for the lantern which Georget carried, but which gave too dim a light to enable them to see whether the gallery extended beyond this trench.

Disheartened by this discovery, they retraced their steps, and entered the other passage, only to find it likewise impassable, it being completely barricaded by a substantial stone wall.

"There is no outlet anywhere," murmured Courapied, disconsolately.

"Unless above our heads," said the thoughtful Georget.

They looked up, but could see no sign of daylight; then, without stopping to ask if it might not be dark without, they returned to the place from which they started.

"There is one comfort," said Georget, pointing to the hams and hogsheads, "we shall not perish of hunger or thirst. But we must put out the lantern."

"Put out the lantern," exclaimed Courapied. "Are you mad, boy? What will become of us without a light?"

"But if we let it burn, father," said Georget timidly, "it will last only about three hours, and after that—"

"We shall not be able to see, it is true; but if you put it out how will you light it again?"

"I had nine matches in my pocket. I have eight now, so for eight days we can have a light eight or ten minutes at a time—just long enough for us to eat."

"A fine prospect, truly! We might as well die and be done with it."

"You forget, father, that some one is almost sure to come down into the cellar in the course of a week."

"Some one! Yes. Zig-Zag, probably, to see if we are dead."

"No, father, not Zig-Zag; but the persons who stored these goods here; so we must try to keep alive until they come."

"That is true. You are right, child. But as we have a light now, let us profit by it, and fix ourselves more comfortably."

"Very well, father, I will begin by making our beds. There is no necessity for us to lie on the damp ground any longer."

"Make our beds! and out of what, pray?"

"Out of hams, of course. Just see."

And Georget attacking the huge pile of American hams, proceeded to spread them out upon the ground in such a way as to form a large and small bed at the head of which he placed several more hams to take the place of pillows.

"The mattresses are a trifle hard, but they are better than none," he remarked.

"You certainly are an ingenious shaver," said his father, admiringly.

"And I have taken care to select a place where we shall be near our larder," added Georget. "We shall only have to reach out our hands to take a bit of pork or to pull the spigot from a hogshead."

"But how about bread?"

"We must manage to dispense with that."

"But the casks are empty, perhaps."

"Oh, no; I tapped on them, and they sound full."

"But what do they contain? Certainly not water. Smugglers would not be likely to hoard up that."

"But, father, you don't like water, so you won't be sorry if this should prove to be wine."

"Try a little, just to see."

Georget pulled the spigot from the barrel nearest him, and allowed a little of the liquid to run into the palm of his hand.

"Ugh! how strong it is!" he exclaimed, as the fiery fluid nearly strangled him.

"It is brandy," growled Courapied. "We can't stand it long if one don't find anything else to drink."

"I think I'll use a little of it to wash my face," replied Georget. "I don't care to remain a negro any longer."

Courapied followed his example, availing himself, of course, of the opportunity to taste the liquor, which proved to be almost pure alcohol.

"We had better let this stuff alone," he growled; "for unless we should be fortunate enough to find a spring, we shall soon be burned alive."

"We must be careful, too, about the light," added Georget; "for so much liquor has soaked into the ground while we have been making our toilet, that a spark might start quite a conflagration."

"Are you hungry, father?"

"No, not yet."

"No matter. I am going to cut two or three slices of ham. I have my knife in my pocket, fortunately."

In rummaging about he had found an old tin can, which he now proceeded to partially fill.

"The table is set; we will breakfast whenever you please," he remarked, when these preparations were completed.

"That will not be very soon, I think. I haven't much appetite. What time do you suppose it is?"

"I don't know. It could not have been far from midnight when we fell into the cellar; but I have no idea how long we remained unconscious."

"Nor have I. All I know is that if you had not woke me, I should be asleep still. In fact, I feel sleepy now."

"So do I, father, and there is nothing to prevent us from indulging in a nap. After we have had a good sleep we shall perhaps know better what to do."

Courapied, nothing loath, stretched himself out upon his novel couch, and was soon fast asleep.

Before following his father's example Georget placed his eight precious matches inside the lantern, to protect them from dampness, blew out the candle, and set it beside his hastily improvised couch.

Their slumber was a prolonged one, and yet Georget woke before his father. Though not a little hungry, he

did not care to breakfast alone; so he sat and waited for Courapied to give some sign of waking.

Suddenly he fancied that he heard a heavy object strike the other side of the wall, but the sound was so indistinct that Georget asked himself if he were not the victim of an illusion; for the strongly built wall was not likely to be a very good conductor of sound.

The lad rose, however, and crawling to the place from which the sound had seemed to proceed, he applied his ear to the wall and listened with breathless attention.

Hearing nothing, he shouted with all his might, but with no other result than arousing his father.

How great would have been their despair had they known that the hollow sound was produced by the fall of the ladder which M. de Menestreau had used in exploring the cellar, and that their benefactress, Camille Monistrol, was in the passage, almost directly over their heads, ready to rescue them if they were still there.

"What is it, my boy?" asked Courapied.

"Nothing, father," replied Georget. "I thought some one was tearing down the wall to free us, but I was mistaken."

"There is no hope for us, my dear child," sighed the old clown.

"Then they must have killed the young lady, for I am sure that she would not abandon us."

"I don't see why you think so. I, for my part, am sorry enough that I got myself into this scrape on her account; and if I ever get out of here alive, I shall tell her so pretty plainly. I know nothing at all about her, for I never even saw her before she came to the fairgrounds in search of me. She says that Zig-Zag killed her father, but nobody knows whether she is telling the truth or not."

"Oh, father, why should you think that she had any idea of deceiving us? She risked her own life, just as we did, and it was no fault of hers that the dog dragged us into the passage."

"I lose all patience with you when you depend on her. Hold your tongue, and light the lantern. I want something to eat."

The first thing Georget did after lighting the candle was to measure it off into eight equal parts which he

marked with his finger-nail, inserting in the first notch a large pin that he had picked up in Brigitte's kitchen.

"What are you doing that for?" asked Courapied, sullenly.

"So we shall not burn too much at a time. If we don't go beyond these marks, we shall be sure of having a light at our disposal until the end of the week," replied Georget, almost gayly.

"It will, perhaps, last longer than we shall," was the gloomy reply.

Georget offered his father the most appetizing slice of ham, though that is not saying much, for this meat from over the sea lacked freshness, so much so, indeed, that the prisoners could eat only a few mouthfuls, and Courapied took a large draught of liquor, to take the taste out of his mouth.

This led to another draught, and the repast would have been a prolonged one had not the dropping of the pin warned Georget that it was time to extinguish the candle.

He did so without sounding the curfew, that is, without warning his father, who gave vent to his disapprobation in several vigorous oaths, for the lad had realized almost from the very first that he could not depend upon his parent's co-operation in effecting their escape from the cellar.

The clown had grown old in a profession that demoralizes even those who possess the best of principles; and after making a fool of himself for the public, he seldom failed to go and quench his thirst at the nearest drinking-saloon. In this way he had acquired a great fondness for alcoholic drinks, and without being what one calls an habitual drunkard, he was generally in a state of partial intoxication, and when in that condition he was of no use whatever.

The lad, knowing this, resolved to dispense with Courapied's assistance entirely, and so began to explore their dungeon without him. He accustomed himself to groping around in the darkness, but unfortunately these attempts resulted in no discovery that would aid in his plans of escape.

Still, it seemed to him that there must be an opening in the ceiling at the end of the closed passage, for he noticed there a draught of fresh air which must come from

above, but though he strained his eyes to the utmost, he could discern no ray of light.

Then a frightful life began for him. Courapied slept all the time, waking occasionally, but only to drink again, and poor Georget, who drank nothing, suffered terribly from thirst.

Time passed without his being able to form any idea of the number of hours and days that dragged by so monotonously, for in the inky darkness he was, of course, utterly unable to distinguish day from night. The lad lighted his lantern only to get food for his father, who ate almost nothing, but who had no difficulty in finding the spigot and filling his can even in the darkness.

This misery must inevitably result in death unless the smugglers or the dealers in stolen goods should take it into their heads to visit the cellar in which their merchandise was concealed.

Georget thought that if they came at all it would be by the opening, whose existence he suspected, so he dragged himself again and again to the end of the gallery, in the vain hope of seeing them appear. But these painful efforts only fatigued and discouraged him still more.

At last he experienced a pleasure he had ceased to expect.

He heard the barking of a dog, and having been cut off from the world so long, the sound astonished him as much as the foot-print on the sand of his desert island astonished Robinson Crusoe. This sound indicated the close proximity of a living creature, and as Georget could hear it distinctly, there must be some communication—probably by means of an open shaft or well—between this passage and the surface of the earth.

The animal could not be far from the mouth of the shaft, and the thought that it might be the terrible Vigoureux lessened Georget's delight very considerably.

"Zig-Zag may have left him to guard the only place of egress, and to devour us if we attempt to leave the cellar," the boy said to himself. "Still, I would rather be devoured by him than die of hunger. But I see no opening, and even if I did, I should be unable to climb to it."

The barking finally ceased, but Georget, after listening awhile, heard the hollow rumbling of distant thunder. A

storm was coming up, for the peals became more and more distinct.

Georget stood with his eyes uplifted, breathlessly awaiting a flash of lightning. It came at last, and by its fleeting light Georget caught sight of a sort of chimney that extended from the roof of the passage to the surface of the plain, and it seemed to him that this chimney was narrow enough for one to climb it by clinging to the sides, as the chimney-sweeps do. But it began six or seven feet from the floor of the passage, and the child could devise no way of reaching it. The discovery of this outlet was none the less precious, however, and Georget firmly resolved to overcome the obstacles that now prevented him from making his escape in that way.

He soon had another and equally agreeable surprise. He felt several big drops of rain upon his forehead. The clouds had broken, and the rain was falling with sufficient violence to reach the cellar by way of this shaft, which consequently could not be very deep.

This water was an inestimable blessing to Georget, who was perishing of thirst, so he hastened back to his father's side in search of the tin can. When he returned to the foot of the shaft, the storm had turned into a deluge, and it took him only a few minutes to fill and drain the can which held a little more than a pint. Then he filled it again, this time for his father.

The refreshing draught lent Georget new energy, and he felt ready to brave any danger to save himself and his father, who certainly stood in great need of assistance. He understood now why he had never discovered the existence of this shaft before. All his visits to the passage into which it opened, must have been made at night, and when the stars were concealed by clouds.

He saw, too, that this shaft could be used only by individuals, as it was much too small for the passage of boxes or barrels. Consequently, there must be some other door which communicated with the cellar into which the father and son had first fallen. There was such a door, unquestionably, but it was so skillfully concealed that it seemed useless to look for it.

But Zig-Zag knew where it was, for he had opened it to place his victims into a less accessible dungeon.

The great difficulty was to reach the opening in the

roof of the passage, and it soon occurred to Georget that he might make a rough step-ladder by piling several casks one above the other. He had noticed that three or four were empty, so it would be an easy matter to move them, and he resolved to perform this preparatory task without delay. Courapied being in no condition to assist him, it was useless to wake him before daybreak.

The clouds were passing over, and the rain had ceased to fall. Georget retraced his steps, bearing the can of water, and soon reached the place where his father was still sleeping on his couch of hams. He placed the can within the sleeper's reach; then in order to work more surely, he decided, sorely against his will, to light his candle.

He had but one match left, and he greatly disliked the idea of using that, for if this plan of escape should fail, he would be condemned to perpetual darkness. There seemed to be no alternative but to make the venture, however.

He found the empty casks without any difficulty, and selecting the one that seemed the strongest he proceeded to roll it to the foot of the shaft.

After he had climbed upon it, he fancied that the sky was less black, and that the first gray light of early dawn was beginning to steal over it.

Just then, he heard his father call him by name; and leaping from the cask, he ran to his parent only to find him sitting up in bed and swearing like a trooper.

"What have you put in this?" he yelled, shaking the can.

"Water, father, I brought it to you. Drink it. I have had some already."

The intoxicated man threw the water straight in the boy's face, saying with an oath:

"Take your water. I want brandy. Pull out the spigot."

"But, father, you must get up now. I have found a way out of this dungeon."

"Go, then. I am going to stay by the barrel, and as you refuse to wait on me, I will wait on myself."

He stretched out his hand, seized the spigot, and as the liquid gushed out, tried to fill his can, but as he did so he overturned the lantern with its lighted candle.

Georget sprung forward to pick it up, but he was too late. The earth being saturated with the liquid, blazed up like a pile of sulphur and the flames compelled the brave child to draw back. He was not injured, but Courapied, who was as thoroughly saturated as the ground, was almost instantly enveloped in flames.

The poor wretch writhed and shrieked in his agony, and his son vainly attempted to tear off his burning garments. He would perhaps have succeeded, but the overheated barrel exploded, and the spirits it contained burst from it in a torrent of flame that instantly engulfed Courapied.

Georget, though he had the presence of mind to spring back, was badly burned, and had barely time to save himself.

His father was lost. The flames and smoke already filled the cellar, and the other casks would soon take fire, so what good would it do for him to remain in this furnace. The instinct of self-preservation made him turn and flee, pursued by a dense smoke that nearly strangled him.

He could not draw a breath until after he had passed the place where the passage divided, nor could he have remained there many minutes without perishing of suffocation, for the fire was approaching with frightful rapidity. He soon reached the foot of the shaft, however, and leaped upon the cask. Looking up he now saw not only the light of day, but a number of iron bars projecting from one side of the shaft, and forming a very trustworthy ladder.

The lowest of these bars was fully a yard above Georget's head, but he was as supple as an eel and as nimble as a goat. Making a vigorous spring he seized the first iron bar with one hand, and raising himself by that, high enough to reach the one above it, he continued in this way until his feet found a place of support.

The rest of the ascent would have been only play for a boy who had practiced gymnastics ever since he was four years old had it not been for the fact that the smoke from the cellar had now reached the shaft, and forced upward by the draught, was now ascending in dense clouds that completely enveloped poor Georget. He persevered, however, though he was completely blinded by the smoke, but just as he began to feel confident that the painful ascent

was nearly completed his head came in contact with an obstacle. The mouth of the shaft was covered with an iron grating.

This time Georget's courage deserted him, and he gave himself up for lost. The smoke was becoming more and more dense around him, and the heat more and more intolerable. Indeed the poor lad found himself in much the same position as a man seated on the top of a chimney in which a hot fire had been suddenly started.

He pushed against the grating with all his might, first with his head, then with his shoulder, and fancied that it yielded a little.

Just as he summoned up all his strength for a final effort, he heard the same loud barking that had startled him before; but this time the dog's nose was so close to the grating that Georget could feel his hot breath.

"It is Vigoureux! I am lost!" he murmured.

Feeling that there was little choice between being torn in pieces by this ferocious animal and perishing of suffocation in the cellar, he was on the point of letting go his hold on the bars, when he was stunned by the noise of a frightful explosion, which, at the same instant, expelled him from the shaft with irresistible force.

Georget, the grating, and the dog were all lifted high in the air at the same time. Indeed, the eruption of a volcano could hardly have produced more astounding results than this outburst from the cellar, in which at least eighteen casks of brandy had exploded almost simultaneously.

The shaft by which the poor lad had just made his way to the surface of the plain was now belching forth flames and dense clouds of black smoke; the earth still trembled, and one of the walls of the brick house had fallen.

The rising sun looked down upon a scene of desolation, and many people could be seen hastening to the spot.

When Georget regained his senses, there were several men standing around him, among them two government employées, who were on their way to the Porte Saint-Ouen when the explosion took place.

In the distance might be seen the dog, running at the top of his speed, though no one evinced any inclination to pursue him.

Georget's first thought was of his father.

"My father! save my father!" he exclaimed.

"Where is he?" asked an old neighbor.

"Down there in the cellar."

"And how came he in the cellar?"

"He fell into it when I did."

"But what have you set fire to down there?" asked the rag-picker. "You are as brown as a roasted pig."

"Some casks of brandy caught fire. It was an accident. But pray let me go to my father's assistance."

"Ah, ha!" exclaimed one of the officials, who happened to be connected with the department of internal revenue, "we must look into this matter!"

He whispered a few words to his companion, who hastened off in the direction of the barracks recently erected on the Boulevard Bessieres.

In the meantime several other persons had come up, among them Father Villard, the proprietor of the famous establishment known as the Tombeau des Lapins, who, on hearing the particulars, exclaimed:

"This must have been going on some time. There has been a light in the brick house every night for a week or more. It is a good thing this happened, as it will put a stop to the rascality. But to think that you revenue men shouldn't have discovered and broken up this ring long ago, especially as the scoundrel's store-house was not five hundred yards from the fortifications."

"It is not too late now, perhaps," growled the official.

And violently shaking the weeping Georget, he said, savagely:

"Come, you young rascal, take me to the entrance of the cellar in which you left your father."

"Yes, yes, gladly," sobbed the boy.

This was more easily said than done, however. The mouth of the smoking shaft was close to the pile of stones where Camille and her friends had paused to deliberate before trying to force their way into the house; consequently, the subterranean passage was on the side nearest to the Route de la Révolte; but all trace of the entrance to the corridor in which Courapied and his son met with their accident had been destroyed when the house-wall was demolished by the explosion.

"There it is," wailed Georget, pointing to a pile of débris.

"Don't try to play the fool! Why don't you say that you won't tell, and be done with it? You'll have to speak by and by, though, when you'll find yourself in prison."

"In prison? I? Why, I have done nothing wrong."

"Oh, we'll let you off after you've told us where the rest of the crowd are. You can't make me believe that you are not one of the gang."

"He acted as spy for the rascals, of course," said Father Villard.

"Yes, yes. To prison with him!" cried the others.

"I am willing to go with you wherever you wish," said Georget; "but won't somebody go to my father's assistance? You certainly won't let a man die without trying to save him."

"If he is down there in the cellar, he was burned up long ago," remarked one of the by-standers.

"I would willingly go down, but I have no lantern," said a rag-picker.

He approached the opening, as he spoke, but the smoke and a sickening odor of burning flesh made him recoil.

"It is too late," he said, kindly, turning to Georget.

The boy burst into a passionate fit of sobbing. He realized that his father was dead. It mattered little what became of him now.

"What is your name?" asked the revenue officer, brusquely.

"Georget Courapied."

"An odd name. What do you do for a living?"

"He's a waiter in a restaurant," remarked one of the by-standers. "That is very evident. Don't you see the buttons on his jacket?"

"No," murmured Georget, "I belonged to a traveling troupe."

"A troupe of what?"

"My father and I performed at fairs."

"That may be true. It seems to me that I did see the lad at the gingerbread fair."

"Yes, we were there."

"That is not the question, however," said the official. "Where do you live?"

"We did sleep in our employer's wagon—"

"And now?"

"We have no home. Our manager failed, and we did

not know what was going to become of us when we fell into the cellar."

"You needn't try to deceive me, you young rascal. Your jig is up. I am going to walk you straight off to the station-house. We'll see if any one appears to claim you."

Georget had Camille Monistrol's name upon his lips, but his youthful shrewdness warned him that the lady who had treated him so kindly would not like to be mixed up in such an affair, so he was silent.

Two gendarmes came up, led by the government official, and Georget resolved to go to prison rather than mention Mlle. Monistrol's name.

CHAPTER IX.

EVERY one knows that obstacles only increase a lover's ardor. This was certainly true in Julien Gémozac's case. He was madly in love, and the more coldly Camille Monistrol treated him, the more passionately he adored her, and the more persistent he became in his attentions to a young lady who not only received them with indifference, but who finally refused to even see him when he called.

All his friend Fresnay's counsels availed him nothing, and the reproaches of his unhappy mother, and the remonstrances of his father, proved equally futile.

The great iron manufacturer treated the matter much more coolly than his wife did, however. Being essentially a business man, he said to himself that Mlle. Monistrol would soon be the possessor of a large fortune, and consequently a very desirable wife for his son, more especially as the immense income which was sure to accrue from her father's valuable invention would thus be kept in the family.

What he feared most, was that Julien, exasperated by Camille's refusals to see him, would plunge into the wildest dissipation. Indeed, he even suspected that this was already the case.

He no longer made his appearance at their mid-day meal, but whether he was sleeping after a night spent at the baccarat-table, or he had gone out early to hang about

the house of his divinity, in the hope of catching a glimpse of her, his father was unable to say.

Things had come to such a pass that M. Gémozac wisely concluded it was time for him to interfere. He could not bear the idea of treating Julien like a refractory child one puts on bread and water; or, in other words, to cut off his allowance, and refuse him the money he spent so recklessly; besides, he realized that paternal admonitions would have no effect upon this headstrong young man, and he finally decided that the best thing he could do would be to appeal to the cause of all this trouble: the lady herself.

She had not paid a visit to his house since her difficulty with his wife, so he resolved to call on her. He could not believe that she had acted badly, nor could he believe that she had taken a dislike to a youth so attractive in every respect. On the contrary, he imputed her apparent coldness and indifference to either shyness or coquetry. Perhaps, too, Mme. Gémozac had wounded her pride in some way. He, for his part, felt confident of his ability to make her listen to reason.

There were other reasons that made him particularly desirous of an immediate interview.

Camille was not of age, nor had she any near relative living. Hence it was necessary for her either to choose a guardian or take the necessary steps to secure her legal independence. M. Gémozac was strongly in favor of the latter course. Mlle. Monistrol would soon have important business matters to transact with her father's partner, deeds to sign, etc., etc. Consequently, it would be advisable to place her in a position to manage her fortune herself, and M. Gémozac wished to advise her to adopt this course, and to offer to take the necessary steps to effect such an arrangement.

Besides, would not this be the best way to prove to her that he had no intention of interfering with her, or of dictating to her in her choice of a husband?

So, one fine day, without consulting his wife, or saying anything to his son, he left the house at about the hour he usually started for his office, but drove to the modest cottage on the Boulevard Voltaire, instead.

On alighting from his carriage, he looked around for a

bell to announce his arrival, but seeing none, he tried the gate, and found it unlocked.

Once in the court-yard, he examined the house, and made a grimace on perceiving that it was little or no better than a porter's lodge.

He walked toward the dwelling, thinking the sound of his footsteps would attract the attention of a servant, but no one appeared, and the whole house wore a deserted air.

"This reminds me of the Palace of the Sleeping Beauty," the visitor said to himself. "The girl has perhaps gone out. But the famous nurse, who was to guard her so faithfully, what has become of her? Perhaps her young mistress has taken her out with her, a very sensible precaution, for the child is too pretty to go about Paris alone."

He again advanced, but not knowing exactly where to find the entrance to this deserted house, he decided to walk around it and look for a door.

He instinctively turned to the right, and soon discovered it, but was surprised to find it standing wide open.

"The deuce!" he murmured, "Mademoiselle Monistrol must be very careless to leave her house at the mercy of the first rascal who happens to come along, especially after the misfortune that lately befell her."

Just then, it seemed to him that he heard talking, and on listening more attentively, he distinctly heard two voices, one certainly that of a man.

"Oh, ho!" M. Gémozac said to himself, "my visit seems to be rather inopportune. The gentleman I hear talking must be Julien's rival—his favored rival, the young man my wife so narrowly escaped meeting the day she called here last. Matters have gone further than I supposed, and I begin to think poor Julien might as well retire from the field. Still, I shall not be sorry to have a look at this suitor."

Accordingly, he walked boldly up the steps, taking care to make as much noise as possible, and to clear his throat two or three times.

They heard him, for the talkers suddenly became silent, and the scraping of chairs on the bare floor announced that they were rising.

Almost immediately, Mlle. Monistrol made her ap-

pearance, dressed as if she had just come in from a walk and had not taken time to remove her hat.

"It is I, my dear child," cried M. Gémozac. "You were not expecting to see me, I am sure."

"No, sir," replied Camille, without the slightest embarrassment. "But you are, and ever will be, welcome here."

"Then you are sure I do not disturb you? I imagine, though, that you are not alone."

"That is true; but I shall be very happy to introduce you to a visitor who has just dropped in. Pray come in, sir."

Gémozac required no urging, but immediately followed Mlle. Monistrol into the dining-room where he found himself face to face with a very good-looking gentleman who was standing there, hat in hand.

"Monsieur George de Menestreau," said Camille, quietly.

On hearing this name, Julien's father started and began to scrutinize the gentleman with rather annoying persistency. His son had informed him that Mlle. Monistrol was receiving the visits of a young gentleman, but he had not told him the gentleman's name, though Camille had taken no pains to conceal it from him.

"Excuse me, sir," said M. Gémozac, without giving the young girl time to complete the introduction, "but are you not from Aveyron?"

"Yes, sir. To whom have I the honor of speaking?"

"I am Pierre Gémozac, and I knew your father well. He was the owner of a foundry in that country and he sold me excellent iron. He was one of the most honorable of men. He is dead, I am told."

"Yes, he died several years ago."

"I was aware that he had a son, and I have always wondered why this son did not continue the business."

"I had not the slightest taste for it, but was, on the contrary, passionately fond of traveling. Having the means to gratify this taste, I left France for America, where I remained a long time. Since then, I have been in China and Japan, and have quite recently returned to France after making a trip around the world."

"You never told me that you had been such a traveler,' murmured Camille.

"And I have been misinformed," added M. Gémozac. "I—pardon my frankness, thought that Menestreau died a ruined man, and that his son had disappeared."

"My father did, in fact, meet with reverses, but I inherited property from my mother—and to travel, is not to disappear," replied George dryly. "I am, however, very happy to meet you, sir, the more happy from the fact that I have been intending to call on you for some time."

"May I ask why?"

"Not to ask you to give me Mademoiselle Monistrol's hand in marriage, as you are neither her relative nor guardian, but to ask your approval. I certainly owe this act of deference to the generous man who came to her father's assistance, and who has since been her friend and protector."

Gémozac looked inquiringly at Camille, who instantly said:

"It was I, sir, who advised Monsieur de Menestreau to show you this token of respect, and as chance has brought us together, permit me to broach a rather delicate subject. Your son has probably spoken to you of a proposal that certainly does me infinite honor, but—"

"Oh, yes, and I have not the slightest objection to it. His mother is rather opposed to it, but she will soon get over that, and I will not conceal from you the fact that you will overwhelm my son with despair by marrying Monsieur de Menestreau.

"Still, you are free, my dear Camille, and I have no right to blame you for following the dictates of your own heart. I came here to-day, indeed, for the express purpose of urging you to take such steps as will make you absolute mistress of your own actions and of your fortune. My indebtedness to you shall be settled every year or every six months, as you may prefer, and you need maintain with me and mine only such relations as you please."

"They can be only of the most affectionate nature," replied Camille, warmly, "as you approve my choice."

"I can hardly say that. Monsieur de Menestreau is the son of a very honorable man, and I have no reason to doubt that he has inherited his father's virtues. Still, I trust he will take no offense if I make some inquiries in regard to him in the home in which his earlier years were spent."

On hearing this announcement, which sounded not unlike a threat, George de Menestreau bit his lips, but the next instant he replied with unruffled calmness:

"You will do quite right to make such inquiries, sir. I fear I am well-nigh forgotten in my old home, but I flatter myself that I have left no unpleasant memories there."

"I am quite sure you have not," said M. Gémozac, thinking the contrary all the while, and secretly resolving to write to one of his correspondents in Aveyron that very day.

He recollected having heard a vague rumor that the elder Menestreau had been ruined by his son, who had turned out very badly; but so many years had elapsed since the former gentleman's death that M. Gémozac would not trust to his memory.

He felt sure he should have plenty of time to make the necessary inquiries before Camille bound herself irrevocably. One can not marry in France without giving the authorities due notice of one's intentions. These formalities take a fortnight at the very least, and he would not need more than four or five days to obtain a reply from Rodez or Decazeville.

"I have made you a poor return for all your kindness," faltered poor Camille; "but I assure you that I am deeply grateful for all you have done for me. Say to your son that had my heart been free—"

"Which it is not, unfortunately," interrupted M. Gémozac in a slightly ironical tone. "Julien will have to console himself as best he can, and perhaps everything will turn out for the best, after all. But it seems to me that you had sworn to marry only the man who should succeed in finding your father's murderer. I am well aware that Julien has not fulfilled these conditions. Monsieur de Menestreau has doubtless been more fortunate, and the assassin has been arrested or is about to be?"

"Alas! no. I even begin to fear that he never will be. Monsieur de Menestreau has done everything in his power. He failed, it is true, but he saved my life."

"Indeed! That being the case, I can not marvel at your desire to reward him. How many perils seem to

environ you. Did the same man that killed your father try to kill you?"

"Not exactly. I heard that he was hiding in an old house near the Porte Saint-Ouen, and—"

"It was probably Monsieur de Menestreau who imparted this valuable information."

"No, it was a poor clown who was a member of the same troupe to which Zig-Zag belonged. So I started out to find him one evening in company with this clown and his son. They never returned—"

"What! did Zig-Zag exterminate them, too? Why! he must be a regular monster."

"I do not know. They disappeared, or rather, they fell into an open trap-door in the hall of the house, and I very narrowly escaped sharing the same fate. I did escape it, however, and fled; but on the lonely plain upon which the house stands I was attacked by two of the scoundrels who haunt the suburbs of Paris, and Heaven only knows what would have become of me had not Monsieur de Menestreau rescued me from their clutches at the peril of his life."

"Monsieur de Menestreau's appearance just at the critical moment was truly providental. What a romance your adventures would make!"

"They are only too real," murmured Camille.

"I do not doubt it, but the romance should have a fitting denouement. You should have visited this brigand's den in broad daylight."

"I did not fail to do so, sir. Monsieur de Menestreau accompanied me. He very kindly explored the cellar into which my unfortunate guides had fallen, but their bodies were not there."

"Consequently they are not dead. If I were in your place, mademoiselle, I should beg Monsieur de Menestreau to call the attention of the *préfet* of police to the house in which so many wonderful things occur. What kind of a looking house is it?"

"It is a brick house—a red brick house. Everybody in that neighborhood knows it."

"A red brick house! How strange! I very rarely read the 'locals,' but this morning my eyes happened to fall on one. It seems that yesterday a red brick house on the Plaine Saint-Denis, very near the Route de la Révolte, an

unoccupied brick house, was nearly demolished by an explosion. It appears that the cellar was used as a storehouse by a gang of scoundrels who were leagued together to defraud the government, and that it was filled with casks of brandy that caught fire, nobody knows how."

"Good heavens! can it be—?"

"There were two victims, the paper stated—a man who was buried alive in the cellar, and a lad who escaped from it, though not until after he had sustained quite serious injuries."

"And what became of him?" asked Mlle. Monistrol, eagerly.

"The paper did not say, but he was probably taken to a hospital. Still, this story can have no connection with yours, and I hardly know why I related it. If it has interested you, you will have no difficulty in learning all the particulars of the affair. But I must leave you now. Business matters require my attention. I only ran away from my office for a few moments to talk with you about your affairs. We now understand each other thoroughly, and hoping to see you soon again, I will leave you now with your betrothed. I have the honor to bid you good-morning, sir."

M. de Menestreau bowed coldly, and the other gentleman withdrew without shaking hands with Camille, who was not much affected by the change in his manner.

"This puts an end to a most embarrassing situation," she remarked. "I have told him the plain truth in regard to my feelings, and I am glad of it. But what do you think of the strange story we just heard?"

"I don't believe a word of it. It is doubtless a pure fabrication. But even if there should be some foundation for it, there can be no connection between it and your expedition with Zig-Zag's friends. They are probably a long way from the brick house before this time. But I have a piece of bad news for you—at least, bad for me. I am going away this evening."

"Going away?"

"Yes, mademoiselle. I am summoned to England by a friend who requires my services in a very important matter."

"And you have deferred telling me of your intended

departure until this late hour?" said Camille, reproachfully.

"I did not know it myself yesterday. The letter from London arrived only this morning. I dared not call before the hour you had appointed, and I was about to tell you of the fact when Monsieur Gémozac happened in. I did not care to announce my intentions while he was here, for I thought he might fancy that I was anxious to leave France before his friends could enlighten him in regard to me."

"What an absurd idea!"

"Didn't you notice that he went away angry? Had he contented himself with venting his displeasure upon me, I should not have cared; but he treated you coldly, even rudely, and it is my duty to warn you that you can place no further dependence upon him. He will never forgive you for having preferred me to his son, and he will do all he can to injure me."

"That makes no difference; my feelings will not change. Neither calumny nor absence will make me forget that we belong to each other."

"If I were sure of that, I should go away with a much lighter heart."

"Is it possible that you doubt me? What have I done to excite such distrust on your part? and what must I do to convince you that I will keep my promise? If the law permitted it, I would marry you to-morrow."

"But the law prevents it, and the formalities to be observed are many and tedious. Would that we were in England. There we should only have to present ourselves before a Protestant clergyman, and to declare to him, upon oath, that there was no legal obstacle to our marriage. If we did that, he would marry us forthwith. But, unfortunately, in this country the law is different; and, before a priest and a mayor will have the right to unite us, my enemies will have time to alienate you from me."

"They would not succeed in doing that; but, to reassure you, I am willing to go to England and marry you there."

"You would do that! You would brave prejudice and slander! You would not be afraid to offend these Gémo-

zacs, even though the father has your fortune in his hands?"

"I would willingly sacrifice my fortune to insure my life-long happiness; but nothing can take it from me. I have found among my father's papers an act of copartnership signed by Monsieur Gémozac. Besides, whatever the nature of my future relations with him and his family may be, I feel sure that Monsieur Gémozac would never intentionally defraud me of a single penny."

"And you are willing to leave France with me this evening?"

"No, my dearest. Though I am very independent, I must show a certain amount of respect for public opinion. People would be sure to say that I had eloped with you, and I do not intend to give them a chance to say that. I will join you in England. Brigitte shall be my traveling companion; and when I return to France, it will be as your lawful wife. But I will not go until after I have learned all the particulars of the strange affair Monsieur Gémozac spoke of just now. Something tells me that the lad saved was the son of Zig-Zag's enemy, that very Georget of whom I have so often spoken. I never can bring myself to believe that he betrayed me."

"I do not share your confidence, my dear Camille, but rest assured that if this lad were your protegé, he would not have failed to come here without delay."

"But he is injured, perhaps, or, who knows? he has been cast into prison as an accomplice. And what will he say if he is questioned? He will speak of Zig-Zag and of me."

"Very possibly, but what can I do?"

"Go and see him and ask him to tell you what happened to him. I don't know where he is, but I shall soon know, for I am going straight to the Porte Saint-Ouen and to the brick house. I will question the guards there."

"Yes, and compromise yourself irretrievably. I entreat you, my dearest, to abandon this project, and if you insist upon investigating the matter, permit me to do it for you."

"You—when you must leave this evening."

"I can defer my journey twenty-four hours. I will warn the friend who is expecting me, by a telegram."

"And I shall see you again to-morrow? Ah, well, in that case, I accept your offer. Only promise me that another day shall not pass without my having news of Georget."

"Say rather of the lad who was picked up at the brick house. That does not amount to the same thing, by any means. Still, I will do my best. But let me hear you say that you will join me in London. I can scarcely believe in so much happiness."

"I have promised, and I never break a promise."

George de Menestreau made a sudden movement as if to throw himself upon his knee before her, but she checked him.

"I hear Brigitte's voice," she said. "I sent her out on an errand, and she must have returned. But how strange! she seems to be uttering cries of terror."

The clang of a hastily closed door followed the cries, and an instant afterward, Brigitte rushed into the room pale and breathless.

"What is the matter?" asked Camille in alarm.

"That dog, that terrible dog!" she faltered.

"What dog?" inquired Mlle. Monistrol, greatly astonished.

"The clown's dog," replied Brigitte, though not without an effort.

Camille started violently, and even M. de Menestreau could not repress a movement of surprise.

"Where is he?"

"In the kitchen, mademoiselle, and it is fortunate that I was able to shut him up there, for he is not muzzled, and he would certainly tear us in pieces. He doesn't look as if he had eaten anything for a week."

"But how did he get in?"

"I was entering the house, with my basket on my arm, when just as I opened the door something dashed by me, almost overturning me. Indeed, he would have knocked me flat upon the floor if I had not held fast to the door. I had scarcely time to close it; and if I had lost my senses for an instant, I am sure that the dog would have sprung at my throat and strangled me, and then have come up and finished you.

"But he can't get out. The window is too high, and

I took the precaution to close the shutters before going to market.

"But hark! don't you hear the fuss he is making?"

In fact, heavy and repeated blows were distinctly audible.

"Go ahead, you vile beast," growled Brigitte. "The door is strong, and you will only wear yourself out. Still, if he keeps on, he will break all my dishes. What is to be done?"

Camille, as much at a loss as her old nurse, looked at George de Menestreau, who seemed to be considering the situation.

"If we could succeed in muzzling him," remarked Mlle. Monistrol, "he might enable us to find Zig-Zag."

"Repeat the expedition of the other night!" exclaimed Brigitte, lifting her hands in holy horror. "You reached home alive, it is true, but you need not expect to be so fortunate another time."

"It would be folly to attempt that, mademoiselle," M. de Menestreau said, at last. "Besides, I am satisfied that this dog does not possess the wonderful powers your guide attributed to him. If he loved his master so much, he would not have left him; and it can not be Zig-Zag he is seeking, as Zig-Zag is not here, unless you suppose that he can find all the places that Zig-Zag ever visited, and that supposition would be absurd."

"Then how do you explain his coming?"

"In the simplest possible manner. This dog, like many others, remembers places wonderfully well. His master must have driven him away, or lost him intentionally, probably fearing that the dog might lead to his identification; for a dog can not be disguised like a man, and every acrobat in the country knows this one. So Zig-Zag managed to get rid of him, and the dog has been roaming about the streets ever since in search of food. He finally returned to the Place du Trône where he had once stayed so long, and while running about the Boulevard Voltaire, he passed your house, and instantly remembered that he had once been here."

"That is quite possible," murmured Camille, though only partially convinced. "Shall we let him in?"

"By no means! I should not be at all surprised if he

were mad, and even if he is not, it would not be well to have any trouble with a dog of his size and strength."

"I'm sure I have no desire to," muttered Brigitte.

"But what shall we do with him?" inquired Camille.

"Exactly what policemen do with stray dogs: kill him."

"That will be no easy matter, I assure you."

"I will attend to that, mademoiselle. Since my late adventure on the Plaine Saint-Denis, I always carry a revolver in my pocket."

"You must not run any risk."

"Oh, I shall not enter the kitchen. I will shoot him from outside. There must be an opening in the shutters."

"Two," promptly replied Brigitte. "Monsieur's plan is an excellent one."

"Then show me a good place, my worthy friend. Mademoiselle will remain here."

"Oh, no, I insist upon accompanying you. If there is likely to be any danger, I am resolved to share it."

"If there were any danger, I should insist upon your remaining here, but there can be none, so come, mademoiselle."

As they passed the kitchen door, they heard, not noisy barks, but the hoarse howls which are considered one of the symptoms of madness.

"You have had a narrow escape, my dear Brigitte," remarked M. de Menestreau. "If this dog had bitten you, you would certainly have died a horrible death."

"Don't speak of it, sir. It makes my blood run cold just to think of it. Make haste and kill him."

They all left the house together, and Brigitte led the way to the tightly closed shutters that protected the kitchen windows.

M. de Menestreau peered through one of the small heart-shaped openings, then said:

"I see him. The deuce! there is a space of at least six inches between the shutters and the glass. It will be more difficult to get a good shot at him than I thought, especially as it is quite dark in there."

He had scarcely uttered these words when the crash of broken glass made him recoil.

Vigoureux having either seen or scented him, had dashed against the window with all his might, and the

broken pane was large enough for his head to pass through. He cut himself badly, however, and his nose, which now appeared at the opening, was torn and bleeding.

In another moment he had forced his head partially through one of the holes in the shutter, and Camille and Brigitte started back in terror, as well they might, for the animal's eyes were blood-shot, his lips were covered with foam, and the ferocious howls he uttered were enough to freeze one's blood.

He was looking straight at M. de Menestreau, who did not move, but who had his revolver leveled at the animal.

He now pulled the trigger, and it was time, for the heavy shutters were cracking under the strain to which they were subjected.

The animal uttered a cry of pain, but did not retreat.

M. de Menestreau had taken good aim, but the bullet swerved a little, and instead of piercing the dog's brain it inflicted a wound just below one eye.

Still, strange to say, Vigoureux, instead of drawing back to escape the bullets, redoubled his efforts to force his way out into the yard.

"Run away, my dear Camille," cried Menestreau, again raising his revolver.

Camille did not move. The terrible sight fascinated her, and she could not take her eyes from it.

Menestreau fired a second time, and without much better success. He hit the dog in the eye this time, but did not kill him, and this new wound only increased the excitement of the animal, who with one frantic effort burst the hook that held the shutters. They flew open, and Vigoureux rolled out upon the sand of the court-yard.

Brigitte ran away, screaming with terror, and Menestreau sprung back to cover Mlle. Monistrol, who stood her ground, resolved to share the fate of the man she loved.

Menestreau had four bullets left in his revolver, but the dog was not mortally wounded, and it would be much more difficult to get a good shot at him now than before.

The animal was up in an instant, and though he had not sufficient strength left to spring upon his executioner, he nevertheless dragged himself slowly toward him, moaning in a pitiful fashion.

M. de Menestreau took advantage of this unexpected

respite to take careful aim, and his third bullet passed through the animal's spinal column. But even then, with the aid of his forepaws, he dragged himself painfully along, with his eyes still fixed upon George de Menestreau's face.

It seemed almost as if the poor brute was pleading for mercy.

He did not obtain it, however. A fourth bullet struck him between the shoulders, and he fell upon his side, dead.

"At last!" muttered M. de Menestreau. "He can not hurt any one now. But he was a tough customer. I thought once that I should not succeed in dispatching him. You must have been terribly frightened," he added, turning to Camille.

"For you, yes; but I must confess that the poor beast's suffering touched me deeply."

"I could understand that if it were any other dog. But are you sure that he belonged to Zig-Zag?"

"Positive. Ask Brigitte, and she will tell you—"

"That it is the very same dog," interrupted the old nurse, who had suddenly reappeared upon the scene of action.

"Then there is nothing left for us to do but to get rid of his carcass. Bring me a spade, and I will bury him in one of the flower-beds."

"Oh, no, let me attend to that, sir. I will drag him out upon the boulevard, and the police will take him away."

"Yes," interposed Mlle. Monistrol, "and now permit me to remind you that you promised to make inquiries about that poor boy."

"I am going now; first, to the brick house, and if I can obtain no reliable information there, I shall then apply to the commissioner of police of that precinct."

"Thanks. I shall await your return with great impatience. Do not keep me waiting long."

"I shall take good care not to do that, as your departure for England is dependent upon this information. I hope to be able to make my report before night. Will you be at home all day?"

"Yes, my dear George, I have not yet entirely recovered from my recent shock, and this scene has upset

my nerves completely. I need rest to set me right again. So go, my friend, and return soon," concluded Camille, offering both hands to her lover, who walked off at a rapid pace, after imprinting a tender kiss upon them.

Brigitte watched this affectionate leave-taking in silence, and her rather sullen air showed that she was not very well pleased.

"Do you really intend to make that journey?" she asked, brusquely.

"Yes," replied the young girl, with some embarrassment; "but we shall not be separated. I intend to take you with me."

"Take me to London, never! I should die of home-sickness in two days in that heathenish country! I am like an old tree; I can not bear transplanting; besides, England is too far from Montreuil. And what is more," she added, sulkily, "if you are going there to marry that handsome young man, you will make a great mistake, and one that you will repent of all your life. I know it is no business of mine, but I can't help worrying about it, and I wish your poor father were alive to hear me. He would not let you follow a man you do not know from Adam—"

"You forget that he saved my life!" interrupted Camille.

"Bah! It is more than likely that he was in league with the rascals who attacked you. The young man is only after your money. Why didn't you take the other, the light-complexioned one? We know something about him, and he loves you for yourself."

"Enough," said Camille, imperiously, the more irritated by these remarks from the fact that she realized the justice of them, at least to a certain extent.

CHAPTER X.

Our light-hearted friend Alfred, Baron de Fresnay, did not take his quarrel with the beautiful Hungarian very deeply to heart.

On the contrary, a drive in the Bois with his friend Julien, an excellent dinner at the Café Anglais, and a visit to the Summer Circus which had just opened on the

Champs Elysées, amply consoled him; and without troubling himself any further about the capricious fair one, he returned to the club about midnight, intending to try his luck again at the card-table, if only to verify the saying: "Unfortunate in love, fortunate at cards."

M. Tergowitz was no longer there. After dinner he had prudently taken his departure, laden with the contents of a dozen pocket-books which he had drained dry.

Gémozac had left his friend after the circus without telling him where he was going, but Alfred surmised that he was going home to curse his more fortunate rival, and brood over Mlle. Monistrol's indifference.

Alfred took the bank, and finally succeeded in regaining all he had lost as a player. He returned home about five o'clock in the morning, well satisfied with his night's work, and not at all uneasy about the morrow, and soon fell asleep to dream of winning all M. Tergowitz's money, and becoming reconciled to the charming Stepanette, who confessed her faults, and begged him to restore her to favor. He even dreamed that he had discovered Monistrol's murderer, and that the beautiful Camille, touched by these proofs of his prowess and devotion, offered him her hand and fortune.

Unfortunately, he was aroused from these blissful dreams about nine o'clock by his valet, who had orders never to enter his master's room before noon.

Alfred opened one languid eye, glanced at the clock, and then hurled a volley of vigorous oaths at his too zealous servant. He called him a brute, and if he did not call him a knave, as they do at the Comédie Française, it was only because Jean would not understand him.

But Jean, accustomed to these ebullitions of temper, did not flinch.

"There is a lady here who wishes to see monsieur," he said, tranquilly.

"Tell her to go to the devil!"

"She assures me Monsieur le Baron made an appointment with her."

"That is false! I make appointments with no one for such hours. Is she pretty?"

Then seeing the valet hesitate, he added:

"What a fool I am to ask the question. No pretty

women are out this early in the morning. Tell her to leave."

"I did, sir; but she won't go."

"That's strange. Did you ask her name?"

"She says her name is Olga."

"Olga! Why, that is a fact! I remember now that I did tell her to call this morning. If I had foreseen that she would come at daybreak, I would have thought twice before I did it. Where did you take her?"

"Into the smoking-room, sir."

"Very well; go and tell her I'll be there presently."

Jean vanished, and Fresnay, after much growling and swearing, finally concluded to get up. After making a hasty toilet, and lighting a cigar to freshen up his clouded brain, he dragged himself to the smoking-room, which was near his chamber.

"Here I am!" he said to his visitor, who was arrayed in one of her mistress's dresses. "You must have been a *cantinière* to get up so early in the morning."

"I knew I should disturb you," said Olga, "but—"

"But you did not want to lose the ten louis I promised you. You shall have them; but you must earn them. What have you to tell me?"

"It depends upon what you want to know?"

"Who was upstairs yesterday when I called?"

"An old friend of madame's."

"His name is Tergowitz, is it not?"

"How do you know that?"

"I know a great deal more than that. He pretends to be a Hungarian, but he is no more a Hungarian than I am!"

"No, I don't think he is," replied Olga, frankly; "but I am unable to say exactly what he is."

"And the pretended baroness was born in a porter's lodge at Montmartre, was she not?"

"No. Her parents were very respectable people, and she was educated for a teacher; but she preferred a more lively life. I see I can safely tell monsieur everything. The fact is, she has had splendid opportunities, but she has not profited by them. She gave up everything to run around, and she has had her ups and downs—more downs than ups, I fancy. Now she has met with a really desir-

able man, it is a pity for her to lose him, and it will end in that if monsieur isn't careful."

"Why? Is she so deeply infatuated with this Tergowitz?"

"Yes; besides, they are old cronies, and have been associated in many affairs that I know nothing about. Still, though they haven't really quarreled, things haven't been moving as smoothly as they might for two or three days past."

"Why? Is the Hungarian jealous?"

"No, it is madame who is jealous. She fancies he is paying court to a very rich young girl, and she is furious, for she has taken it into her head to marry Monsieur Tergowitz herself; and this whim is the more absurd on her part, from the fact that she is already married."

"Indeed, and to whom?"

"To a good for nothing fellow she married because she was dying of hunger. I know nothing about him, for I never saw madame while she was living with him. But I did not come and disturb monsieur merely to tell him things that he knows already; I came because something new has happened. Last evening Monsieur Tergowitz called, and he and madame had a terrible quarrel. I listened on the stairs, and once I thought I should have to go in and interfere, for I feared they were coming to blows. They finally seemed to become reconciled, however. This morning madame rang very early for her chocolate and the newspapers. While reading them she uttered a cry, and started up so suddenly that she overturned her cup. I asked her what the matter was? She didn't answer, but sprung up out of bed, and began to walk up and down the room, gesticulating excitedly, and talking to herself. I thought she was going mad. Suddenly she began to throw on her clothes, calling to me to bring her walking shoes, her mantle and her hat. It usually takes her two hours and a half to dress, but this time it didn't take her ten minutes. I ventured to inquire if I should fetch a carriage. 'No—hold your tongue,' was the only thanks I received for this suggestion. 'Would madame be back to breakfast?' 'She really did not know.' 'And if Monsieur Fresnay should call before madame returns?' 'Shut the door in his face.'

"I hope monsieur will not be angry with me for repeating these words."

"On the contrary, I am infinitely obliged to you. Now what do you think of all this? Do you think Stepanette intends to take French leave of us?"

"I am afraid so, for I noticed that she took all her money with her. Still, she left all her clothing and jewels. Wouldn't it be well for monsieur to come over to the house and see if everything is all right there? Then, if madame should take it into her head to come back, monsieur could have a talk with her."

"That wouldn't be a bad idea, but I can't go yet, for I haven't breakfasted."

"Monsieur might breakfast there. I am a capital cook."

"Then why shouldn't I?" exclaimed Fresnay. "You shall prepare breakfast for me, and tell my fortune while I am eating it. If Stepanette should return, I would like to see her face when she finds us seated at the table together."

"She might dismiss me," said Olga; "still, I don't care for that, for I feel sure that monsieur will see me safely out of the scrape."

"I will give you enough money to open an office, and I'll send all the idiots of my acquaintance to you to have their fortunes told. You can make enough in six months to retire from business.

"In the meantime, here are ten louis to begin with. Put the money in your pocket, go for a carriage, get into it and wait for me at the door. I will be ready in twenty minutes."

Olga slipped the bank-notes in her bosom, and hastened off in search of a carriage.

Fresnay made a hurried toilet, and after telling his valet that he might not be back before night, he went to join Olga whom he found waiting at the door.

He asked her numerous questions as they bowled along toward Auteuil, but he found her less inclined to make any revelations in regard to her mistress.

Olga probably considered that she had already given him two hundred francs worth of information. Perhaps, too, she was already beginning to repent of having betrayed Mme. de Lugos.

"Where does this Tergowitz live?" Alfred inquired. "He must have some abiding place."

"Yes, certainly," replied Olga, "but I don't know where it is."

"You must have known him, though, before you entered the service of the countess."

"Very slightly."

"Did they reside in Paris when they lived together?"

"I think not. They have both traveled a good deal."

"That doesn't surprise me. Stepanette must have been a circus performer."

"What an idea!"

"An idea that would instantly occur to any one who saw her upon the trapeze. She is a star of the first magnitude, too. It is a very rare accomplishment with young ladies of respectable family, however. Not that I think any the worse of her for having danced upon the tight-rope. I have always had a fondness for artists. But tell me, how old is she?"

"Monsieur knows that a lady is always of the age she looks to be."

"She looks young, I admit. But be frank now, doesn't she dye her hair?"

"All women dye their hair nowadays."

"I don't blame her, I am sure, for that Venetian chestnut suits her to perfection. But what color was her hair before she dyed it?"

"Black or dark brown, I think. I am almost sure that she was a brunette."

"Very possibly, for she has a colorless skin, and jet-black hair. If she should take it into her head to change her nationality, she would have no difficulty in passing herself off for a Spaniard. Is she a Parisian?"

"Yes, a pure-blooded Parisian. But it would be useless for you to ask me her real name, for I can't tell you, as she has always concealed it from me—on account of her family—you understand."

"She's a Montmorency, probably," remarked Fresnay.

Olga did not seem to notice the joke.

These remarks, and others of a similar nature occupied the time until they reached Auteuil, but on alighting at the door of the house on the Rue Mozart Fresnay was not much wiser than before.

'If monsieur does not need me, I will go to market," said Olga. "It is only a few steps from here, and monsieur can have breakfast in half an hour."

Fresnay then threw her a louis and entered the house, while the delighted maid ran into the kitchen to get her basket.

There had not been the slightest change in the drawing-room since the evening before. The ropes that supported the trapeze were still dangling from the ceiling.

On the floor above, however, there was every indication of a hasty departure. The dressing-room and bedroom were both in the utmost disorder. The chairs were strewn with dresses, the floor with silk stockings and fragments of letters, while on the bed lay a long and narrow box strongly resembling a pistol-case.

An open newspaper lay on the little table beside the bed. It had apparently been thrown there by an impatient hand.

It occurred to Fresnay that it was in this paper that Mme. de Lugos must have read the news that had so excited her; so he picked it up and glanced over it, in the hope of finding the paragraph.

He saw a long list of carriage accidents, thefts, fires, sudden deaths, and other items of a local nature, but nothing that could have the slightest connection with either Mme. de Lugos or M. Tergowitz.

But he perceived that a paragraph had been cut from the last column on the second page, and this was doubtless the work of the countess. If she had taken the trouble to do this in her haste and exasperation, it must have been in order that she might be able to show Tergowitz an item that concerned either him or her.

"I will soon find out what the paragraph was about," Fresnay said to himself. "I shall only have to send Olga to the nearest newspaper stand to purchase another copy of the same paper."

While waiting to solve this mystery, he began to look around him for some more significant clew, and finally picked up the iron box, fully expecting to find it locked.

To his very great surprise, he had only to lift the cover to open it, and his astonishment increased when he beheld its contents, which proved to be a pair of steel gauntlets

which might have formed a part of the armor of a knight of mediæval times.

Fresnay could hardly believe his eyes, and he was obliged to take up the gauntlets and turn them over and over, before he could make up his mind that he was not mistaken.

Whence came these curious articles! The ancestors of this pretended Madame de Lugos certainly had not figured among the Crusaders, and consequently these gauntlets could not be a family relic. Had she stolen them from a museum? And why had she preserved them so carefully?

On examining them more closely Fresnay perceived that they were of modern make. The steel was new and shining, and they were lined with a soft kid that had become slightly discolored by use, particularly at the places that corresponded with the finger joints. This seemed to indicate that they had been worn, but by whom, and under what circumstances? Perhaps by some actor in a grand spectacular drama. But how had they come into Stepanette's possession? Did they belong to Tergowitz? This pretended Hungarian's life had doubtless been full of strange vicissitudes, and it was not unlikely that he had been an actor.

Fresnay tried the gauntlets on, and found them very comfortable. It was only necessary to press a spring to fasten them on securely, and once on, they did not impede the movements of his hands in the least. On the contrary, they seemed to increase his power to seize objects, to hold a sword or a saber for example.

"They are perhaps fencing gloves of a new design," Alfred said to himself. "I have a great mind to take them and show them to my armorer."

And hearing Olga's step on the stairs, he slipped them into his pocket.

"Breakfast is served," said she, from the doorway, dropping a low courtesy.

The table was laid in the dining-room. Upon a cloth of dazzling whiteness, delicate pink shrimps and scarlet radishes flanked a dish upon which smoked eggs cooked with truffles. For substantials, dishes of cold meat of various kinds; and for dessert, a basket of superb cherries. Through a cut glass decanter gleamed wine of the clearest topaz.

"Ah, you are a jewel!" exclaimed Fresnay. "It would have taken my valet an hour to get up such a breakfast."

"I truly hope monsieur will find everything to his liking. As for the wine, it is some of the choice Sauterne monsieur sent to madame."

"I did not expect to drink it, but as it is drawn, fill my glass, my dear," said Alfred, attacking the eggs.

Olga filled the glass, and remained standing, with one hand resting upon her hip, in the traditional posé of a stage *cantinière*.

"You look very pretty in that attitude," continued Fresnay, "and your fried eggs are a great success."

"Monsieur is a flatterer."

"No, upon my word! You have a very piquant way about you, really. Sit down, and let us talk."

No very great amount of urging was required to induce Olga to take a seat at the table. It was very evident that she no longer felt any fear of being surprised by her mistress or of losing her situation.

Perhaps she even flattered herself that she might take the mistress's place in this gentleman's affections, and Alfred's compliments perhaps heightened this illusion.

"Ah, madame must have lost her head completely to act as she has," she remarked. "I wonder what monsieur will do about this new escapade."

"That depends," replied Fresnay, as he helped himself to a second glass of Sauterne. "I think I shall forgive her if she will tell me the truth about Tergowitz."

"Monsieur seems to feel a great interest in the man."

"The same interest one always feels in the achievements of a clever rascal. I am curious to know who he is, and how the part he is playing is likely to end."

"If it ends badly for him, it will not end well for madame. They quarreled last night, it is true, but heretofore they have been on the best possible terms, and they have been working together in perfect harmony."

"Working together is good! Do you mean that they have been leagued together to extort money out of idiots?"

"I should answer yes, if I did not fear to pain monsieur."

"Oh, I will cheerfully acknowledge myself to be one of the dupes, and I shall not be in the least offended if you prove that this amiable couple have succeeded in victimizing me to a very considerable extent. On the contrary, I

shall be infinitely obliged if you will give me full information in regard to them. If you would only tell me their true history and their real names, I could not do enough to prove my gratitude."

"Monsieur is jesting," murmured the fortune-teller, blushing with pleasure.

"No, I am really in earnest, upon my honor! I begin to believe that these two people have a crime upon their conscience. In union there is strength; and now they are at odds, they will be quite likely to denounce each other, and as you may suppose, I feel no desire to be mixed up, even indirectly, in an affair that is likely to come before the Court of Assizes. Now, go on, and tell me all you know about them. I swear that you shall not repent of it. I will make your fortune."

"If I were sure monsieur would not tell madame how he obtained his information, I would gladly tell monsieur all I know."

"I will not tell her, I promise you that. Come, go on. If you will, I will give you a start in business. The night I met you at the Café Americain, you told me you were going to meet some one who was waiting for you at the Western Railway Station. It was a falsehood, was it not?"

"No, by all I hold sacred, madame arrived by the five o'clock express."

"That is to say, she pretended to arrive then. I met her at the Café des Ambassadeurs the evening before."

"I knew you must have met her before, as you called at the Grand Hôtel to see her. I was surprised though, that she had invited you there, for she might have known that the hotel people would tell you that she had arrived only that morning."

"One can not think of everything. But how did you become acquainted with this estimable couple?"

"I met them frequently at fairs, and sometimes my tent happened to be next to theirs."

"I was right, then, when I said that Stepanette had been a circus-performer."

"Yes, she hadn't her equal as a tight-rope dancer a few years ago, but since she became so stout she has figured chiefly in the show at the door."

"She must have drawn a crowd with those eyes of hers.

But in what capacity did the Hungarian nobleman appear? As the clown?"

"Oh, no; Amanda's husband was the clown."

"So her real name is Amanda. She did well to change it. Stepanette is much more aristocratic. But what was our other friend's specialty?"

"He was an acrobat, and one of the cleverest I ever saw. He could earn a handsome living anywhere just with one feat that he calls head-first. There isn't an acrobat at the Champs Elysées's circus who can compare with him."

"Head-first!" repeated Fresnay. "Wait a second. It seems to me I have heard of that feat before. Under what name did he appear at the fairs?"

"Zig-Zag was his stage name."

"Zig-Zag! Did you say Zig-Zag?" cried Fresnay, rising so hastily that he overturned the basket of cherries.

"Good heavens! what is the matter with you?" exclaimed Olga, springing up in alarm.

"Were not Zig-Zag and Amanda performing together, about three weeks ago, at the fair on the Place du Trône?" inquired Fresnay, eagerly.

"It is very possible, or rather probable, for their employer never missed one. Still, I can not swear to it, for I was not in the city at the time."

"Where were you?"

"In Beauvais, where I did not make a penny. The sheriff seized my horse and chaise, and I had barely enough money left to buy a third-class ticket back to Paris. I hoped to find some way to earn a living here, and I was lucky for once, for I had not been here an hour, when I met Zig-Zag in the street—Zig-Zag arrayed like a prince. I spoke to him, and asked him if he couldn't do something to help an old friend along, and he proposed that I should enter Amanda's service."

"Didn't you ask him how he had made such a fortune?"

"Of course. He replied that he had recently inherited a fortune from an uncle, and this did not surprise me much, as I had always understood that his family was a wealthy one. He told me that he had had enough of the circus business, and that he was going to make a fresh start in life. It was evident that he had plenty of money, and that he must have shared it with madame."

"I know where they got it," muttered Fresnay. "Now give me the scoundrel's address."

"I swear to you that I do not know it. I swear it by the ashes of my mother."

"Where did he and Amanda meet?"

"Here, as I have already told you; though when madame went out, it was to see him, I am sure. But she never talked to me about her affairs, and I never ventured to follow her."

"But you will do so now, if I pay you for it, will you not?" asked Fresnay.

"I am no spy," was the rather curt reply. "I have told you this about madame, because I thought you ought to know it. But why do you want me to follow her? You must think that Zig-Zag has been guilty of robbery or murder."

Fresnay was about to reply in the affirmative, but suddenly changed his mind. It was very evident that this woman knew little or nothing about these persons' immediate antecedents. Indeed, it was doubtful if she had even heard of the murder on the Boulevard Voltaire, and certainly her mistress had not taken her into her confidence.

It would be far better for him to keep what he knew to himself, however, for Olga, better informed in regard to what had transpired, might take her mistress's part and warn her of her danger.

"You have met Monsieur Tergowitz several times, you say," continued Olga. "How does it happen that you failed to notice that he and Zig-Zag were one and the same person?"

"I had seen Zig-Zag only with a mask over his face."

"That is true. I forgot that he always appeared before the public masked. But you must have seen Amanda, too."

"Yes, and I don't understand why I failed to recognize her when I met her in the guise of a countess. It is true that she had dyed her hair, and that changes her greatly, of course."

"Yes, so greatly, that I, myself, scarcely recognized her when I met her again. But I hope that when she returns, you are not going to tell her to her face all I have told you about her and her friend Tergowitz."

"I shall take very good care not to do that, for she would tear my eyes out, and I don't want a scene. I shall utter no reproaches, nor shall I ask her any embarrassing questions."

"But she is not here yet, and I would like to do justice to this breakfast prepared by your fair hands—they are very fair—so do me the favor to resume your seat and keep me company. I can not bear to eat alone."

Olga, nothing loath, reseated herself, and proceeded to fill the glass of the baron, who said:

"I hate to drink alone even worse, so pour yourself out a glass of Sauterne, my dear, and drink to my health."

"No, no," simpered the fortune-teller. "I am only a poor servant-girl."

"That makes no difference. Come, no ceremony. Hold your glass, I'll fill it myself."

Olga obeyed, but as she leaned toward Alfred to touch her glass to his, a voice cried, sharply:

"You are enjoying yourself, I see. It is quite evident that you were not expecting me!"

This voice, which they both recognized, rang in poor Olga's ear like the trump of doom.

But Fresnay was neither alarmed nor surprised. On the contrary, he remained quietly in his seat and drained his glass to the very last drop.

The countess dropped the portière, and slowly advanced toward the table, surveying Alfred with eyes that positively blazed with anger.

"Will you be so kind as to inform me what gives you the right to make yourself so much at home?" she asked, curtly.

"But it seems to me that I am at home, at least to some extent," replied Fresnay, smiling.

"I know that this house belongs to you, but I am occupying it, and I forbid you to set foot in it again so long as I remain here.

"As for you, hussy," she added, turning to Olga, "you are dismissed. Leave the house immediately!"

"Madame will be sorry for this," replied the fortune-teller, maneuvering all the while to reach the door.

"No threats. Behave yourself, and don't let me hear of you again, or I will save you the necessity of seeking lodgings by sending you to the penitentiary."

"It would seem that Mademoiselle Olga has not a clear conscience herself," thought Fresnay. "Can it be that she, too, was implicated in Monistrol's murder?"

"Very well. I am going," said Olga, but in a much less insolent tone.

She glanced at the baron, in the hope that he was going to interfere, but the baron said not a word, so Olga departed, secretly vowing vengeance upon both of them.

"It is our turn now, sir," said Mme. de Lugos.

"Why these tragic airs, my dear?" asked Fresnay, coolly. "A scene about fried eggs is simply ridiculous, for I don't suppose jealousy can be the cause, as I certainly must have better taste than to prefer your maid to you, and in your absence I thought it would do no harm to order breakfast, as I was dying of hunger."

"You did not come here to get your breakfast; you came to play the spy. It does not matter, however, for I am about to leave France, and shall never set eyes on you again, thank Heaven!"

"You are leaving France for Hungary, I suppose?"

"Probably."

"In company with your old friend, Monsieur Tergowitz?"

"What business is that of yours?"

"None whatever. Only it seems to me that I saw him yesterday at the club."

"You know him, then?"

"Yes, indeed. I saw him with you at the Café des Ambassadeurs, and I met him on the staircase of the Grand Hôtel, the day I first called on you. Besides, the Pole who brought him to our club registered him under the name of Tergowitz. I can even tell you some news that will doubtless prove of a very pleasing nature, as you are such a very particular friend of his. He has just won a large sum of money at play."

"What do you call a large sum?"

"Oh, everything is comparative, fifteen or twenty, or perhaps even thirty thousand francs. I can not say exactly, as I am not on speaking terms with him."

"Do you think he will revisit the club?"

"I really can not say. Why do you ask the question?"

"Because I am looking for him."

"Don't you know where he lives?"

"Yes. I went there this morning, but I could not find him, nor could any one tell me when he would return; and I must see him to-day."

"To decide with him upon the hour of departure? Shall I send him to you if I happen to meet him?"

The countess started. She perceived at last that Fresnay was ridiculing her. Anger had blinded her at first, but her eyes were now opened, and she saw that Olga had betrayed her secret. All further subterfuges would therefore prove unavailing.

"Before we part, I am going to ask one last favor of you," she said, suddenly.

"It is granted, whatever it may be."

"Oh, I shall not take too great an advantage of your kindness. It is simply a request that you will accompany me—"

"Where? To Hungary?"

"Not nearly so far. I only wish you to go with me to witness an execution, right here in the city. Come, I have a carriage at the door. Give me time to say a word to Olga, and then we will go."

CHAPTER XI.

After the explosion that saved his life, Georget passed several days and nights that were almost as wretched as those spent in the cellar of the brick house.

He had been dragged before a commissioner of police, and that functionary had subjected him to a searching examination. He was strongly suspected of being in the employ of the gang of defrauders that had made the cellar of the deserted dwelling their store-house, and the magistrate tried to compel him to denounce them.

The lad defended himself, however, as well as he could, by telling pretty nearly the truth.

He declared that while in pursuit of a lost dog, his father and himself had lost their way on the Plaine Saint-Denis, and had taken refuge in a ruined house, where they fell through an open trap-door into a very deep cellar. There they had remained at least seven days and nights among piles of hams and casks of brandy, to which his father had accidentally set fire.

After listening to this not altogether unplausible explanation, the commissioner had visited the scene of the catastrophe in company with Georget. The gendarmes were already there, and the cellar had been carefully explored. The charred remains of Courapied had been discovered. The wall that had divided the cellar had been injured by the explosion, but as it was still standing, a careful examination showed that several large stones in the middle of it had been cleverly arranged to revolve upon themselves when pressure was applied to a certain spot.

Georget's story did not correspond in all respects with what he had said to the by-standers immediately after the catastrophe, but the commissioner did not attach much importance to this slight discrepancy; nor did he think for an instant of accusing the lad of having set fire to the casks of brandy in the hope of getting rid of his father.

He insisted, however, upon knowing the name, residence, and profession of the deceased; but Georget, fearful lest he might implicate Mlle. Monistrol, confined himself to saying that his father was so poor he had no home, and that most of the time they roved about, earning their bread as best they could.

Vagrancy is not a very grave offense, and Georget would probably have been released forthwith, had it not been for the rather showy clothing he wore. The commissioner suspected him of having stolen this gorgeous outfit, and all his protestations to the contrary were powerless to convince the man that held the boy's fate in his hand. So, instead of setting him at liberty, he sent him to the Depôt until further information should be obtained in regard to him.

Georget made no protest. He knew that they would become tired of keeping him sooner or later, and that he would then be free again.

The brave lad really grieved over but one thing: that he was not able to attend the funeral of his father, who had been buried in the Potters' Field. But he vowed vengeance on Zig-Zig and Amanda, who had made him an orphan; and he secretly resolved to resume the hunt that had resulted so disastrously, to track them to their hiding place, and finally to deliver them up to justice, and thus

avenge not only his own father, but the father of Camille. In the meantime he prepared his plan of action.

He felt sure that Zig-Zag and his companion were still in Paris, and that it was not at fairs he must seek them, but at places of fashionable amusement. He said to himself: "I will earn my living by calling carriages, and opening doors for theater-goers. It will take time, but I shall find them sooner or later."

Such were his plans, when one of the assistant jailers sent for him one morning. The boy's heart throbbed loud and fast at first; for, knowing nothing about the customs of the prison, he fancied for a minute or two that he was about to be cast in a gloomy dungeon, to perish there.

He did not dare to question the official, and was most agreeably surprised when the man opened a massive door and pushed him out, saying as he did so:

"Clear out, you young scamp, and see that you don't get back here again."

At last he was free again! But freedom is not everything. One must have food, and he was penniless, and he knew that no one would trust him for a single cent's worth.

It is true that he had only to present himself at Mlle. Monistrol's house to be received with open arms, but he did not wish to be seen entering the cottage on the Boulevard Voltaire; for, though he was as brave as a lion, he was also as prudent as a serpent, and he greatly feared that he would be shadowed by some member of the detective force.

He had taken it into his head that he might have been released by the officers of the prison in order to find out where he would go on leaving the Dépôt, for he had read several of Gaboriau's novels, and had learned through them that the police sometimes resort to this expedient when they have failed to establish the identity of a prisoner.

He forgot that novelists do not always pride themselves on a strict adherence to the truth; besides, he greatly exaggerated his own importance.

So he resolved not to go straight to Mlle. Monistrol's residence but to approach it by the most roundabout way, and to examine the outside of the house carefully before venturing in.

After satisfying himself that no suspicious character

was dogging his steps, he walked leisurely toward the Isle Saint-Louis, which he traversed from end to end; then crossed the right bank of the river.

Before reaching the Place de la Bastile he turned more than once to see if any one was following him, and, reassured at last on this score, he had about made up his mind to approach the Boulevard Voltaire by the Rue de la Roquette, when, on passing a station from which several lines of omnibuses started, he saw a woman whom he fancied he knew alight from one of these vehicles.

Her face seemed familiar, but he could not recollect where he had met her, for she was handsomely dressed, and Georget's acquaintance with richly clad ladies was extremely limited.

She, too, had paused on seeing him, and now stood watching him with strange intentness. She, too, was evidently asking herself where she had seen him before.

At last she approached him and asked:

"Aren't you Georget, Courapied's son."

"Yes, madame," replied the lad, though not very promptly. "But I don't know who you are."

"Nevertheless you have climbed into my wagon more than once, and no longer ago than last year, at the Saint-Cloud Fair."

"Oh, I know you now, madame. It was you who told fortunes and—"

"Exactly, but I'm not following that business now."

"That is very evident. You have retired with a fortune, I judge."

"I think I can hardly say as much for you. You look rather seedy. Where did you get that rig? Are you a waiter now?"

"No, but I am trying to earn my own living."

"Isn't your father with you?"

"My father is dead!"

"Is it possible! Why, the last time I saw him he looked as hale and hearty as could be. He drank too much, though, at times, and I suppose it was liquor that carried him off at last."

"No, madame, he was killed."

"What! Who killed him?"

"Zig-Zag."

"Nonsense! In that case he would have been arrested,

and I saw him only yesterday. And your step-mother, what has become of her?"

"She ran away with Zig-Zag, and she helped him to kill papa. If you know where they are pray tell me. I am looking for them."

"What for?"

"In order to have them both sent to the guillotine."

"Just hear the boy! But how did they kill Courapied?"

"Father was trying to find them. He wanted to get his wife back. They enticed him into a house near the Route de la Révolte. I was with him at the time. We fell into a cellar through a trap-door that they had left open expressly for us. They afterward locked us up in this cellar, and we should have starved, if the cellar had not been full of hams and casks of brandy. This brandy caught fire, and father was burned to death. What I am telling you is true. It was in all the papers."

Olga—for this was Olga—who had been strongly inclined to doubt the lad's statements at first, was struck by this last assertion, for she recollected that the pretended Countess de Lugos had rushed out of the house like a madwoman after a hasty glance at her morning paper.

She, Olga, had just left the house on the Rue Mozart, vowing vengeance upon her former mistress, so these disclosures were most gratifying.

"I begin to think you are telling the truth," she exclaimed. "I have no love for the good-for-nothing creatures, so I shouldn't be very sorry to see them come to grief. But you are very much mistaken, my boy, if you think what you have just told me will cost them their heads. Persons are not guillotined for shutting a man and a boy up in a cellar. They would get only six-months' imprisonment, at the very longest."

"But they have done something much worse," replied Georget, forgetting that this disclosure might lead him further than he thought.

"What?" asked the fortune-teller eagerly. "Did they steal their employer's money before they ran away?"

The manager had no money. The concern is all broken up, and father and I didn't get so much as a penny."

"Then where did they get the money they are living on now? They are rolling in gold."

"From a man that Zig-Zag murdered."

"Nonsense!"

"It is the truth. That affair, too, was in the papers."

"I very seldom read them. When did it occur?"

"About three weeks ago."

"I was not here then. I was in Beauvais. But are you sure that Zig-Zag and Amanda were guilty of this crime?"

"I am not sure that Amanda had any hand in it, but she must have profited by it, as she ran away with Zig-Zag."

"Yes, that is as plain as daylight. And you are anxious to find them, you say?"

"Oh, yes, yes!"

"In order to denounce them?"

"Certainly. I would show them no mercy. They have injured me, and those who were kind to me, too deeply."

"Yes, Amanda did treat you shamefully; there is no doubt about it. Well, if you want to know where they are, come with me."

"Will you take me where they are?"

"Listen. I saw Amanda this morning—only an hour ago, in fact. She did not tell me where she was going, for she is a sharp one, and distrusts everybody; but, just as I left her, she stepped into the carriage, and I heard the address she gave the coachman. I even noticed the number of the carriage, and if we should find it in front of a door, it will be proof positive that she is in the house."

"Come, then," said Georget, eagerly.

"Very well; but I warn you that I sha'n't go in. I don't want to see her."

"Very well; but I shall go in."

"You can do as you please, of course; but I shall go about my business, and let you have it out with her alone."

"That suits me. Is it far from here?"

"Not very far. We shall be there in twenty minutes. But I would rather you did not walk along beside me. We might meet Zig-Zag."

"I will follow you at a little distance."

"Let us start, then. Try not to lose sight of me."

"There is no danger of that. I have sharp eyes."

Olga took up the line of march, and Georget followed her.

Olga was delighted. She had the best of reasons for keeping in the background as much as possible, but chance had furnished her with an unexpected opportunity to avenge her wrongs without compromising herself.

Georget was equally jubilant, for he flattered himself that his father's murderer was already in his power, and so congratulated himself most heartily on his meeting with Olga.

He was not a little surprised to see her turn into the Rue de la Roquette, as if with the intention of going to Mlle. Monistrol's house, and his astonishment increased as he saw her when half-way down this thoroughfare, that leads to the place of execution, turn to the right, into the Boulevard Voltaire.

Where could she be going? And how had that odious Amanda summoned up the assurance to repair to the locality where her lover had committed such a terrible crime.

Olga hastened on, and Georget soon caught sight of the cottage in which he had dined with his father before starting out upon their unfortunate expedition.

He was walking on, with his head high in the air, so as not to lose sight of the fortune-teller, when he suddenly stumbled over something that was lying directly in his path.

It was the body of a dead dog that obstructed the way, and Georget, on glancing at it, uttered such a sharp cry that Olga turned and retraced her steps, startled by these signs of agitation and terror.

"What is the matter?" she asked.

"It is Vigoureux, Zig-Zag's dog," faltered the lad.

"That is true," said Olga, stooping to examine the brute's bloody carcass. "It is that hateful beast that was always snapping at everybody. Once he tore a brand-new dress in pieces for me. Thank heaven! he can't bite any one now."

"He has been shot," murmured Georget. "It certainly was not Ziz-Zag that did it. He thought too much of his dog. But how came he here?"

"How do I know? His master used to perform on the Place du Trône. Vigoureux was looking for him, perhaps, and some passer-by shot him."

"Then I am afraid Zig-Zag can not be far off."

"Bah! he will not eat you if he is. If he had you in

the house, he might make things lively for you, but he won't dare to molest you in the street. Still, I can't say that I am particularly anxious to meet him. Come with me now as far as that carriage you see standing down there. It looks very much like the one I saw Amanda get into."

"What! down there in front of that board fence?"

"Yes. Is there anything very astonishing about that?"

"That is the house where Zig-Zag strangled the man."

"Nonsense! You must be mistaken!"

"I am not mistaken. I know the house; I went there once with my father."

"And is the house occupied now?"

"Yes. The daughter of the man Zig-Zag killed still lives there."

"Alone?"

"With an old servant."

"And Amanda has gone to pay her a visit? How strange!"

"Who knows but she intends to kill the young lady, too," murmured Georget, shuddering at the thought that his benefactress might be in mortal peril.

"You need have no fears of that, child. Amanda has some one with her—a gentleman, not a scoundrel like Zig-Zag. But the deuce take me if I can imagine what has induced her to bring him here. This matter is worth looking into, really; so wait here for a moment while I go and take a look at the carriage."

Georget, greatly excited, watched her as she approached the vehicle and glanced at the number painted upon its lamps.

"It is the same carriage," she remarked, when she had returned to the lad's side. "Amanda is in the house, and if you miss her, it will be your own fault."

"No, for she may leave in the carriage, and I shall not be able to follow her on foot."

"You need not wait for her to come out. The gate is not locked. Walk straight in upon her. I should like to see the hussy's face when she catches sight of you. She dresses like a fine lady, now, and she has dyed her hair red, but you will recognize her all the same. Call her by her right name, and ask her when she heard from Zig-Zag. You'll get the best of her—never fear. And you

needn't be at all afraid of the gentleman who is with her. He will take your part, I assure you."

"I am not afraid of him. I am not afraid of anything except of troubling the person who lives there."

"The daughter of the man Zig-Zag killed? Why, on the contrary, she will thank you, for she must be as anxious to avenge her father as you are to avenge yours. Besides, I'm almost sure that Amanda is plotting some mischief against her.

"Now, my boy, I must leave you to manage the affair as best you can. I have put you on the track, and will now leave you to bag your game.

"I am going, and I trust you won't forget your promise not to mention my name, whatever the result may be. I shall leave Paris immediately, in order to be out of reach in case of any scandal. I shall return, perhaps, when Zig-Zag and Amanda are safe in jail, but remember, if you ever meet me, that you have never seen or heard of me before. Do you understand?"

And with this rather unceremonious leave-taking, Olga crossed the boulevard, and walked rapidly toward the Place du Trône.

She had fired the train, and did not care to stay and witness the explosion.

She left poor Georget in a very embarrassing position. Great as was his desire to unmask Amanda, and capture Zig-Zag, he nevertheless hesitated to intrude upon Mlle. Monistrol without giving her some warning; besides, what should he say in the presence of the strange gentleman who might be an enemy.

Before deciding on the course to be pursued, Georget determined to effect a quiet entrance into the yard, if possible. As the coachman was fast asleep on the box, the boy had no difficulty in doing this; but he dared not even glance up at the windows for fear of seeing, or being seen by, Brigitte, who would be likely to receive him very ungraciously.

Fortunately Brigitte did not make her appearance, and Georget's eyes happened to fall upon a tiny house in which M. Monistrol had been wont to keep his hoes, rakes, watering-pots and other gardening implements.

The boy instantly took refuge in this, closing the door behind him, for through the poorly joined planks, he

could plainly see any one who entered or left the cottage.

CHAPTER XII.

After M. de Menestreau's departure, Camille relapsed into a most despondent mood. Life seemed to have lost all charm for her, and the future appeared even more gloomy than on the day immediately following her father's death.

Since that catastrophe, everything seemed to have conspired against her. The murderer was still at large. If the papers could be believed, one of those who had tried to assist her in capturing him, had died a violent death, and Georget was in prison. All her former friends had deserted her. The Gémozacs were hopelessly estranged from her; the mother would have nothing more to do with her; the father had left her, deeply offended, and his return seemed very doubtful, and the son, whose pride had been so deeply wounded, no longer seemed averse to yielding his place to a rival.

Even Brigitte did not hesitate to express her disapproval of her young lady's choice, and had flatly refused to accompany her to England.

To compensate for this widespread defection, she had George de Menestreau devotion—that is to say—the devotion of a man whom she scarcely knew, who exercised over her the mysterious but powerful fascination to which inexperienced young girls seem such easy victims.

She had fallen in love with him in a paroxysm of profound gratitude, and she persisted in regarding this love *au sérieux*, and in attaching undue importance to the fancy; but she was beginning to vaguely comprehend that she was doing wrong to unite her destiny irretrievably with that of a handsome young man whose principal claim upon her favor, consisted in having put two scoundrels to flight.

She persisted in her determination, however, and was ready to keep her imprudent promise to join the stranger in England and marry him there.

Her sole condition, and that was hardly worthy of the name, had been that he was to bring her news of Georget.

She was not obliged to wait long for this. In less than two hours after the shooting of Vigoureux, M. de Menest-

reau returned, and found her alone in the little drawing-room where her father had met with a violent death at the hands of an assassin.

Camille received him with less warmth than usual, for she felt strangely depressed in spirits.

"It seems that one can place very little dependence upon newspaper reports in this case, as in many others," M. le Menestreau remarked rather carelessly. "An accident similar to the one described did take place on the Plaine Saint-Denis; but the victims were two poor wretches, a man and a boy who were sleeping there, for want of a better resting-place, and who are in no way connected with the parties in whom you take such an interest."

"What! the boy is dead, too?" murmured Camille.

"He survived the accident a few hours, but his injuries were so serious that he did not live the day out. He was buried this morning. I learned all these particulars from the coroner who conducted the *post-mortem* examination."

"Dead! Both of them dead for me!" repeated the young girl, her eyes filling with tears.

"What! Do you still believe that they were so devoted to your interests? How can I convince you that they have rejoined their accomplice Zig-Zag?"

"Do not try to convince me that they betrayed me. If my faith in them is only a delusion, do not take it from me. It would grieve me deeply to lose it."

"Heaven preserve me from wounding your tender heart, mademoiselle!" exclaimed George. "I will never speak of them again. But permit me to allude to myself, as I have only a few moments more to spend with you. I have just received a telegram from London which makes it absolutely necessary for me to leave this evening, and—shall I confess it?—I have no hope of seeing you again."

"Have I not pledged you my word?"

"Yes, mademoiselle; and I do not doubt your intention of keeping it. But what will happen after my departure? You will be surrounded by persons who hate me, and who will not fail to traduce me."

"To what persons do you refer?"

"First and foremost to Monsieur Gémozac. He wants to keep you for his son, on account of your fortune. What is to prevent him from telling you that he has received

the worst possible reports in relation to me. I shall not be here to defend myself, and—"

"Monsieur Gémozac is an honorable man, and utterly incapable of misrepresentation or falsehood, I am sure. I have informed him in your presence of my intention to marry you. I have solemnly promised to be your wife. What more can you ask?"

"Nothing; I have no right. But I entreat you to leave Paris with me."

"You know perfectly well that is an impossibility."

"Why? You need not consider Monsieur Gémozac's wishes, as you are in possession of papers that insure your independence."

Camille started. This commingling of impassioned protestations of love and questions of a financial import struck her most unpleasantly. M. de Menestreau perceived it, and realized that it was time to have recourse to his strongest means of persuasion.

"Go with me. I beseech you on my knees," he pleaded, falling at Camille's feet with a grace that the greatest of actors might well have envied.

Mlle. Monistrol, surprised and frightened, drew back, but he seized her hands and covered them with burning kisses.

"Let me go," she cried, trying to release her hands.

But George held them firmly. Springing to his feet, he passed his arm around her waist, and drew her to his heart in spite of her frantic efforts to free herself.

Suddenly a heavy hand was laid upon M. de Menestreau's shoulder, and a voice cried:

"Release that lady, you scoundrel!"

George de Menestreau's grasp relaxed, and he turned, furious with passion, while Camille sunk half fainting into an arm-chair.

She had caught a glimpse of a woman's face, and she thought she must be dreaming.

But George had recognized the intruder, and he sprung upon her, saying with an oath:

"So you have betrayed me! Ah, well, you shall die. I'll wring your neck for you!"

"Not here, Monsieur Tergowitz," tranquilly replied the Baron de Fresnay, suddenly emerging from the dining-room, where he had been hiding behind the portière.

"Madame de Lugos told me you were here," resumed the baron, with astonishing composure, "and insisted upon my acting as her escort. She feels the need of an explanation with you."

Then, advancing, hat in hand, toward the terrified Camille, he said, gently:

"Pardon this most unceremonious intrusion into your home, mademoiselle. I flatter myself, however, that you will thank me by and by, for having presented myself here without your permission. Besides, I have already had the honor of meeting you under circumstances which I am sure you have not forgotten. I was with my most intimate friend, Julien Gémozac, on a certain eventful evening, you recollect." Camille made no reply. She did not yet understand the full import of his words, but M. de Menestreau turned as pale as death.

"I will now give Madame de Lugos a chance to speak," Fresnay continued, turning to him. "You know her very well, it seems, and she must think a great deal of you, as she has come here in search of you."

"Enough!" replied M. de Menestreau. "Stand aside, and let me pass. I know you no more than I know this woman."

Fresnay showed no intention of obeying this peremptory order, however, and Mme. de Lugos, shaking her clinched fist at the speaker, cried vehemently:

"You dare to deny me, wretch! Tell me to my face that you have not been my lover. I defy you to do it."

"You shall answer to me for this scene, sir," exclaimed George de Menestreau, white with rage. "You are the sole cause of it, and—"

"Silence, you scoundrel!" cried the pretended countess. "A gentleman does not fight with a villain like you. It is not by the hand of a baron that you will meet your death. Oh, you need not scowl at me. I know what it may cost me to denounce you, but that makes no difference to me. So you think to desert me just when it becomes in your power to marry me, for I have been a widow since day before yesterday! Ah! well, you shall perish on the guillotine, thief! assassin! Yes, assassin!"

"What do you say?" cried Fresnay, in pretended astonishment.

"You do not know all," continued Mme. de Lugos,

passionately. "You think him only an adventurer, but I—I will tell you what he is. He began by robbing his father, who died of grief and mortification. Then he became a gambler, and after cheating at cards, again and again, he became a circus performer, in order to escape the gendarmes who were in pursuit of him. I met him, and was fool enough to fall in love with him. I had much better have hung myself, then I should not have had to end my days in the penitentiary as I shall now— And if that were all he had done! But the rest, can you not guess? If you and your friend Gémozac had not been so blind, Zig-Zag would have been in prison a fortnight ago."

"Zig-Zag!" repeated Mlle. Monistrol, turning inquiringly to George de Menestreau, who, with a scornful shrug of the shoulders, replied:

"The woman is mad!"

"Villain!" shrieked the pretended countess, now nearly frantic with rage, "we will see if I am mad! Look at me, mademoiselle. You do not recognize me, because I have dyed my hair, but you have seen me before. You saw me the evening your father was killed—you saw me on the Place du Trône. It was I who had you turned out of the show which you had entered while pursuing your father's murderer."

Camille uttered a wild cry, and looked at Menestreau with eyes distended with horror.

"Do you recognize him now?" continued Amanda, who could scarcely contain herself.

"No, no! It can not be! It is impossible!" murmured the girl.

"You will not believe me because the scoundrel rescued you from two scamps on the Plaine Saint-Denis. Oh! he knew what he was doing. He had made inquiries and learned that you were rich. That very night he began to deceive me. I was with him in the brick house when that brute Courapied fell into the cellar with his brat, and you made your escape. Guess what he told me before he started out after you. He said that he was going to murder you on the highway, and I was fool enough to believe him. He had his plans. He hoped that you would be attacked, and you were, and he appeared upon the scene just in time to rescue you. Your gratitude was so great

that you fell in love with him on the spot, and if I had not come here to warn you to-day, you would have married him before the end of another week. But I am here, and you shall not fall into his clutches. You have never done me any harm. It is upon him that I wish to wreak my vengeance, not upon you.

"Come, baron, there must be a servant somewhere about the house. Call her, and send her for two policemen to arrest Zig-Zag and me."

Fresnay seemed in no haste to obey. He had not foreseen that matters would come to a climax so quickly, and he began to repent of having subjected Mlle. Monistrol to such a trying scene.

The poor girl looked ready to faint, and M. de Menestreau had the audacity to turn to her, and say:

"You must understand, mademoiselle, that I scorn to defend myself; for you know as well as I do that I am not Zig-Zag. You have seen him, or rather you have seen his hands."

"Yes," faltered Camille.

"His hands!" repeated the pretended countess. "They are white and slender, but if you imagine that they are not strong enough to strangle a man, you are very much mistaken. You do not know Zig-Zag. He has the strength of four ordinary men. He fought with our Hercules once at the Neuilly fair, and conquered him with those same small hands."

"No, no! his are not the hands of the assassin! They were of enormous size. And then that crooked thumb,—those fingers, hooked like claws!"

"Would you recognize them if you should see them again, mademoiselle?" inquired Fresnay.

"Yes."

"Well, I will show them to you."

And he drew from his overcoat pocket the steel gauntlets he had found on the Rue Mozart.

Mlle. Monistrol recoiled in horror, and closed her eyes to shut out the sight of those instruments of death.

"I see, now, why you set such store by your box!" cried Amanda. "If you had not sent Vigoureux to fetch it, we should never have been caught. Now your doom is sealed, and mine, too. We both have a through ticket for Mazas, old fellow!"

Zig-Zag struck his accomplice a heavy blow with his fist, pushed Fresnay aside, and darted out of the room.

"You shall not escape me," cried the tight-rope dancer, starting off in hot pursuit.

Fresnay hastened to the assistance of Mlle. Monistrol who had fallen back in a dead faint, for he was not at all anxious to overtake the interesting couple. He was only too glad to get rid of the Countess de Lugos.

She might have made her escape and Zig-Zag also, for Brigitte had not returned from market, if Georget had not been watching from the little tool-house in which he had concealed himself.

When he saw them emerge from the cottage, he sprung out and seized Zig-Zag by the leg, crying, "Help! help! Murder! murder!"

Amanda, wild with rage, had overtaken her accomplice, and was holding fast to his overcoat collar.

Just then, two policemen, attracted by Georget's cries, hastened up, and the coachman who had brought Amanda and Fresnay to the house, jumped from his box and rushed into the yard.

Zig-Zag, seeing the officers approaching, realized that he was lost. He freed himself with a sudden jerk that sent Georget reeling to the earth, and drew his ever-present revolver from his pocket.

"Kill me, villain!" cried Amanda, boldly confronting him. "I prefer it to ending my days in the penitentiary, and it will only increase your chance of ending yours on the guillotine."

Zig-Zag fired, and the unfortunate woman fell, shot through the heart. He fired again, and this time the bullet passed through the shoulder of Georget, who had just staggered to his feet. With the third bullet he blew his own brains out.

So the policemen on their entrance found two lifeless bodies and an unconscious child stretched out upon the grass, and the coachman exclaimed loudly on recognizing the lady he had brought from the Rue Mozart.

The coachman was not the first to reach the scene of bloodshed, however, for Julien Gémozac, who as usual was not far off, had heard the shots.

He had come to see if what his father had told him in relation to Mlle. Monistrol's engagement was indeed true;

so one can very readily believe that he wasted no time in deploring the fate of his rival, but rushed into the house where he feared he should find Camille, too, a corpse.

As he flew up the steps, three at a time, he fell into the arms of his friend Fresnay, who remarked tranquilly:

"Your lady love is in there. Go and console her."

Julien did not stop to ask any further explanation, but hastened into the drawing-room, where he found Mlle. Monistrol lying back in an arm-chair, her eyes dilated with horror, and her arms hanging inertly at her sides.

"Are you hurt?" he cried, anxiously, seizing her hands.

She shook her head, but no sound came from her parched lips.

"The scoundrel tried to kill you, I am sure," continued Gémozac. "Who saved you?"

Then, seeing her still silent, he added:

"I can guess. It was Fresnay. But you need have no fear now. The villain is dead."

"He killed himself, did he not?"

"I do not know. There is a woman and a man and a child, all lying in a pool of blood."

"A child! Take me to him."

She tried to rise, but Julien checked her.

"Spare yourself the frightful sight," he said. "I don't know who the child is, but I recognize the woman. As for the man—"

"The man is my father's assassin."

"What?"

"It is the truth. And I thought I loved him—I had promised to marry him! Ah, why did he not kill me, too?"

Julien, utterly bewildered, knew not what to say in reply.

"You wish to die," he murmured, reproachfully. "Have you forgotten that I love you?"

"Do not say that. I am not worthy of you."

Julien was about to protest, when Fresnay entered abruptly, and cried:

"It is all over! Zig-Zag has inflicted punishment upon himself, after sending Amanda to the other world. The child is coming around all right, though the deuce take me, if I know where he came from. He is dressed like a restaurant waiter, and—"

"Georget! It is Georget! I must see him!" cried Mlle. Monistrol.

"You will see him quite soon enough. The police are coming to question you. Let me answer them for you. But before they come, let me say a word to both of you. You, Julien, are passionately in love with Mademoiselle Monistrol, and to marry her is the one desire of your life. It is no fault of yours, that you did not capture Zig-Zag, and it was purely by chance that I succeeded in winning the prize mademoiselle offered, so I will not wrong her by claiming it. *Mauvais sujets* like myself make miserable husbands, so I very willingly relinquish my claim to you.

"You, mademoiselle, made a great mistake, as not unfrequently happens in such cases, but you were born to make my friend happy. Give me your hand, I beseech you." Camille, deeply moved, extended it to Fresnay, who placed it in that of Julien. "That is as it should be," he said, with comical gravity. "You are betrothed. When will the wedding come off? I invite myself to it. Now let me usher in the officers. I hear them coming up the steps."

* * * * * * *

The affair created a great deal of talk, but this has not marred the happiness of the newly married pair.

They are traveling in Italy, and their honey-moon is one of unclouded bliss. Camille is sad only when she thinks of her father.

Fresnay has resumed his old habits, but is no more successful in amusing himself than formerly. There are times when he even thinks with regret of Amanda, Countess de Lugos.

Olga has gone to tell fortunes in the sunny south.

Georget is employed in the office of M. Gémozac, who will insure him a prosperous future.

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